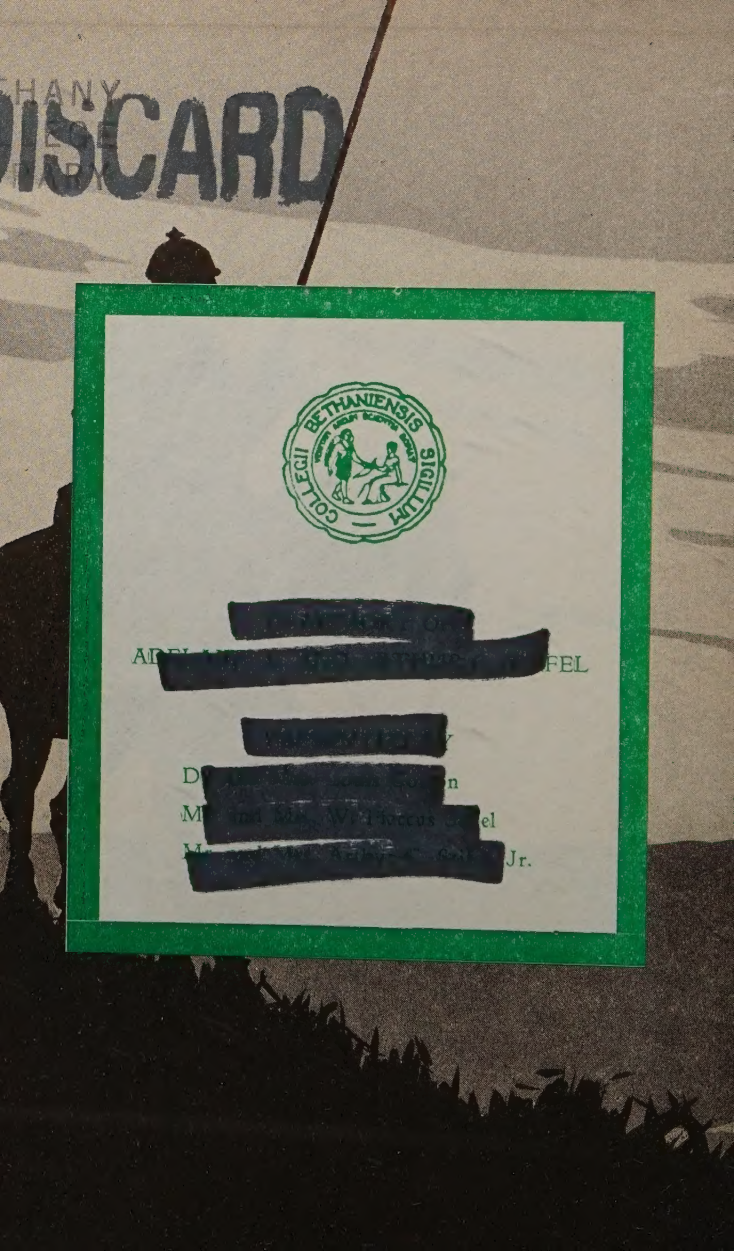
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Reeling, staggering, wrestling—they fought with wolf-like fury!

The Historical Romances of Robert W. Chambers

THE RECKONING

McKINLAY, STONE & MACKENZIE
NEW YORK

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ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

Printed in the United States of America

TO MY FRIEND

J. HAMBLEN SEARS

WHOSE UNSELFISH FRIENDSHIP AND SOUND ADVICE

I ACKNOWLEDGE IN THIS

DEDICATION

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I

His muscle to the ax and plow,
His calm eye to the rifle sight,
Or at his country's beck and bow,
Setting the fiery cross alight,
Or, in the city's pageantry,
Serving the Cause in secrecy,—
Behold him now, haranguing kings
While through the shallow court there rings
The light laugh of the courtezan;
This the New Yorker, this the Man!

II

Standing upon his blackened land,
He saw the flames mount up to God,
He saw the death tracks in the sand,
And the dead children on the sod,
He saw the half-charred door, unbarred,
The dying hound he left on guard,
And that still thing he once had wed
Sprawled on the threshold dripping red:
Dry-eyed he primed his rifle pan;
This the New Yorker, this the Man!

III

He plowed the graveyard of his dead
And sowed the grain to feed a host;
In silent lands untenanted
Save by the Sachems' painted ghost
He set the ensign of the sun;
A thousand axes rang as one
In the black forest's falling roar,
And through the glade the plowshare tore
Like God's own blade in Freedom's van;
This the New Yorker, and the Man!

R. W. C.

PROLOGUE

ECHOES OF YESTERDAY

His Excellency's system of intelligence in the City of New York I never pretended to comprehend. That I was one of many agents I could have no doubt; yet as long as I remained there I never knew but three or four established spies with residence in town. Although I had no illusions concerning Mr. Gaine and his "Gazette," at intervals I violently suspected Mr. Rivington of friendliness to us, and this in spite of his Tory newspaper and the fierce broadsides he fired at rebels and rebellion. But I must confess that in my long and amiable acquaintance with the gentleman he never, by word or hint or inference, so much as by the quiver of an eyelash, corroborated my suspicion, and to this day I do not know whether or not Mr. Rivington furnished secret information to his Excellency while publicly in print he raged and sneered.

Itinerant spies were always in the city in spite of the deadly watch kept up by regular and partizan, and sometimes they bore messages for me, the words "Pro Gloria" establishing their credentials as well as mine. They entered the city in all guises and under all pretexts, some as refugees, some as traitors, some wearing

the uniform of Tory partizan corps, others attired as tradesmen, farmers, fishermen, and often bearing passes, too, though where they contrived to find passes I never understood.

It was a time of sullenness and quick suspicion; few were free from doubt, but of those few I made one—until that day when my enemy arrived—but of that in its place, for now I mean to say a word about this city that I love—that we all love, understanding how alone she stood in seven years' chains, yet dauntless, dangerous, and defiant.

For upon New York fell the brunt of British wrath, and the judgment of God fell, too, passing twice in fire that laid one-quarter of the town in cinders. Nor was that enough, for His lightning smote the powder-ship, the *Morning Star*, where she swung at her moorings off from Burling Slip, and the very sky seemed falling in the thunder that shook the shoreward houses into ruins.

I think that, take it all in all, New York met and withstood every separate horror that war can bring, save actual assault and sack. Greater hardships fell to the lot of no other city in America, for we lost more than a half of our population, more than a fourth of the city by the two great fires. Want, with the rich, meant famine for the poor and sad privation for the well-to-do; smallpox and typhus swept us; commerce by water died, and slowly our loneliness became a maddening isolation, when his Excellency flung out his blue dragoons to the very edges of the river there at Harlem Bridge.

I often think it strange that New York town re-

mained so loyal to the cause, for loyalty to the king was inherent among the better classes. Many had vast estates, farms, acres on acres of game parks, and lived like the landed gentry of old England. Yet, save for the DeLanceys, the Crugers, their kinsmen, the Fannings, kin to the Tryons, Frederick Rhinelander, the Waltons, and others too tedious to mention, the gentlemen who had the most to lose through friendliness to the cause of liberty, chose to espouse that cause.

As for the British residents there, they remained in blameless loyalty to their King, and I, for one, have never said one word to cast a doubt upon the purity of their sentiments.

But with all this, knowing what must come, no other city in America so gaily set forth upon the road to ruin as did patriotic New York. And from that dreadful hour when, through the cannon smoke on Brooklyn Heights, she beheld the ghastly face of ruin leering at her across the foggy water—from that heart-breaking hour when the British drums rolled from the east, and the tall war-ships covered themselves with smoke, and the last flag flying was hacked from the halyards, and the tramp of the grenadiers awoke the silence of Broadway, she never faltered in her allegiance, never doubted, never failed throughout those seven years the while she lay beneath the British heel, a rattlesnake, stunned only, but deadly still while the last spark of life remained.

Were I to tell a tithe of all I know of what took place during the great siege, the incidents might shame the wildest fancies of romance—how intrigue swayed with intrigue there, struggling hilt to hilt; how plot and

plot were thwarted by the counterplot; how all trust in man was destroyed in that dark year that Arnold died, and a fiend took his fair shape to scandalize two hemispheres!

Yet I am living witness of those years. I heard and saw much that I shall not now revive, as where the victims of a pest lie buried it is not wise to dig, lest the unseen be loosened once again. Yet something it may be well to record of that time—the curtain lifted for a glimpse, then dropped in silence—to teach our children that the men who stood against their King stood with hope of no reward save liberty, but faced the tempest that they had unchained with souls self-shriven and each heart washed free of selfishness.

So if I speak of prisons where our thousands died—hind and gentleman piled thick as shad in the fly market—sick and well and wounded all together—it shall not be at length, only a scene or two that sticks in memory.

Once, in the suffocating heat of mid-July, I saw a prison where every narrow window was filled with human heads, face above face, seeking a portion of the external air. And from that day, for many, many weeks the dead-carts took the corpses to the outer ditches, passing steadily from dawn to midnight.

All day, all night, they died around us in ship and prison, some from suffocation, some from starvation, others delivered by prison fevers which rotted them so slowly that I think even death shrank back reluctant to touch them with his icy finger.

So piteous their plight, these crowded thousands, crushed in putrid masses, clinging to the filthy prison

bars, that they aroused compassion in that strange and ancient guild that once had claimed the Magdalen in its sad sisterhood, and these aided them with food, year after year, until deliverance.

They had no other food, no water except from polluted drains, no fire in winter, no barriers to the blackest cold that ever seared the city from the times that man remembers. I say they had no other food and no fire to cook the offal flung to them. That is not all true, because we did our best, being permitted to furnish what we had—we and the strange sisterhood—yet they were thousands upon thousands, and we were few.

It is best that I say no more, for that proud England's sake from whose loins we sprang—it is best that I speak not of Captain Cunningham the Provost, nor of his deputy, O'Keefe, nor of Sproat and Loring. There was butchers' work in my own North, and I shall not shrink from the telling; there was massacre, and scalps taken from children too small to lisp their prayers for mercy; that was devils' work, and may be told. But Cunningham and those who served him were alone in their awful trade; cruelty unspeakable and frenzied vice are terms which fall impotent to measure the ghastly depths of an infamy in which they crawled and squirmed, battening like maggots on hell's own pollution.

Long since, I think, we have clasped hands with England over Cherry Valley and Wyoming, forgiving her the loosened fury of her red allies and her Butlers and McDonalds. The scar remains, but is remembered only as a glory.

How shall we take old England's wrinkled hand,

stretched out above the spots that mark the prisons of New York?—above the twelve thousand unnamed graves of those who died for lack of air and water aboard the *Jersey?* God knows; and yet all things are possible with Him—even this miracle which I shall never live to see.

Without malice, without prejudice, judging only as one whose judgment errs, I leave this darkened path for a free road in the open, and so shall strive to tell as simply and sincerely as I may what only befell myself and those with whom I had been long associated. And if the pleasures that I now recall seem tinged with bitter, and if the gaiety was but a phase of that greater prison fever that burnt us all in the beleaguered city, still there was much to live for in those times through which I, among many, passed; and by God's mercy, not my own endeavor, passed safely, soul and body.

THE RECKONING

CHAPTER I

THE SPY

HAVING finished my duties in connection with Sir Peter's private estate and his voluminous correspondence—and the door of my chamber being doubly locked and bolted—I made free to attend to certain secret correspondence of my own, which for four years now had continued, without discovery, between the Military Intelligence Department of the Continental army and myself through the medium of one John Ennis, the tobacconist at the Sign of the Silver Box in Hanover Square.

Made confident by long immunity from the slightest shadow of suspicion, apprehension of danger seldom troubled my sense of security. It did sometimes, as when the awful treason at West Point became known to me; and for weeks as I lay abed I thought to hear in every footfall on Broadway the measured tread of a patrol come to take me. Yet the traitor continued in New York without sinister consequence to me; and, though my nights were none the pleasanter during that sad week which ended in the execution of the British adjutant-general, no harm came to me. Habit is the

great sedative; at times, penning my spy's journal, I smiled to remember how it was with me when first I came to New York in 1777, four years since, a country lad of nineteen, fresh from the frontier, where all my life had been spent among the Oneidas and the few neighbors nearest Broadalbin Bush—a raw youth, frightened but resolved; and how I lived through those first months of mental terror, now appalled by the fate of our Captain Nathan Hale, now burning with a high purpose and buoyed up by pride that his Excellency should have found in me a fit instrument for his designs.

I have never known whether or not I am what men call brave, for I understand fear and I turn cold at thought of death. Often I have sat alone in the house watching the sober folk along Broadway and Wall Street, knowing all the while that these same good people might to-morrow all go flocking to Catiemuts Hill near the Fresh Water, or to that open space in the "Fields" between the jail and the Almshouse, to see me on the gallows. If such thoughts do not assail the brave—if restless nights, wakeful dawns, dull days are not their portion—I must own that all these were mine, not often, perhaps, but too frequent to flatter self-esteem. And, fight them as I might, it was useless; for such moments came without warning—often when I had been merry with friends, at times when, lulled by long-continued security, I had nigh forgotten through eventless months that there was a war and that I had become a New Yorker only because of war.

It was harder now, in one sense; four years as secretary to my kinsman, Sir Peter Coleville, had admitted

me to those social intimacies so necessary to my secret office; and, alas! friendships had been made and ties formed not only in the line of duty, but from impulse and out of pure affection.

I had never found it was required of me to pose as a rabid loyalist, and so did not, being known as disinterested and indifferent, and perhaps for that reason not suspected. My friends were from necessity among the best among the loyalists—from choice, too, for I liked them for their own sakes, and it was against their cause I worked, not against them.

It went hard with me to use them as I did—I so loathing perfidy in others; yet if it be perfidy to continue in duty as I understood duty, then I practised it, and at times could scarce tolerate myself, which was a weakness, because in my own heart I knew that his Excellency could set no man a task unworthy of his manhood. Yet it were pleasanter had my duties thrown me with the army, or with Colonel Willett in my native north, whence, at his request, I had come to live a life of physical sloth and mental intrigue under the British cannon of New York—here in the household of Sir Peter Coleville, his secretary, his friend, his welcomed guest, the intimate of his family, his friends! —*that* was the hardest of all; and though for months at a time I managed to forget it, the recurring thought of what I *was*, and what they believed me to be, stabbed me at intervals so I could scarce endure it.

Nothing, not even the belief that God was with us, I fear, could have held me there when the stress of such emotion left me staring at the darkness in my restless

bed—only blind faith in his Excellency that he would do no man this shame, if shame it was—that he knew as well as I that the land's salvation was not to be secured through the barter of men's honor and the death of souls.

The door being secured, as I say, and the heat of that July day abating nothing, though the sun hung low over Staten Island, I opened my windows, removed coat and waistcoat, and, drawing a table to the window, prepared to write up that portion of my daily journal neglected lately, and which, when convenient opportunity offered, was to find its way into the hands of Colonel Marinus Willett in Albany. Before I wrote I turned back a leaf or two so that I might correct my report in the light of later events; and I read rapidly:

July 12, 1781.—Nothing remarkable. Very warm weather, and a bad odor from the markets. There is some talk in the city of rebuilding the burned district. Two new cannon have been mounted in the southwest bastion of the fort (George). I shall report caliber and particulars later.

July 13th.—This day Sir Peter left to look over the lands in Westchester which he is, I believe, prepared to purchase from Mr. Rutgers. The soldiers are very idle; a dozen of 'em caught drawing a seine in the Collect, and sent to the guard-house—a dirty trick for anybody but Hessians, who are accustomed to fish in that manner. The cannon in the southwest bastion are twelve-pounders and old—trunnions rusted, carriages

rotten. It seems they are trophies taken from the Carolina militia.

July 14th.—A ship arrived in the lower bay. Details later. In Nassau Street, about noon, a tall fellow, clothed like a drover, muttered a word or two as I passed, and I had gone on ere it struck me that he had meant his words for my ear. To find him I turned leisurely, retracing my steps as though I had forgotten something, and as I brushed him again, he muttered, "Thendara; tell me where it is."

At that moment Captain Enderley of the Fifty-fourth Foot greeted me, linking his arm in mine, and I had no excuse to avoid him. More of this to-night, when, if the message was truly for me, I shall doubtless be watched and followed when I leave the house for a stroll.

July 15th.—Last night there was no chance, Enderley and Captain O'Neil coming to take me to the theater, where the Thirty-eighth Regiment gave a frolic and a play—the latter most indifferent, save for Mrs. Barry's acting. I saw my drover in John Street, too, but could not speak to him.

This morning, however, I met the drover, and he was drunk, or made most marvelous pretense—a great six-foot, blue-eyed lout in smock and boots, reeking of Bull's Head gin, his drover's whip a-trail in the dust, and he a-swaggering down Nassau Street, gawking at the shop-windows and whistling Roslyn Castle with prodigious gusto.

I made it convenient to pause before Berry and Roger's show of jewels, and he stopped, too, swaying

there gravely, balanced now on hobnail heel, now on toe. Presently he ceased his whistling of Roslyn Castle, and in a low but perfectly distinct voice he said, "Where is the town of Thendara, Mr. Renault?" Without looking at him or even turning my head, I answered, "Why do you ask me?"

He stared stupidly at the show-window. "Pro patria et gloria," he replied under his breath; "why do you serve the land?"

"Pro gloria," I muttered. "Give your message; hasten."

He scratched his curly head, staring at the gewgaws. "It is this," he said coolly; "find out if there be a lost town in the north called Thendara, or if the name be used to mask the name of Fort Niagara. When you have learned all that is possible, walk some evening up Broadway and out along Great George Street. We will follow."

"Who else besides yourself?"

"A brother drover—of men," he said slyly; "a little wrinkled fellow, withered to the bone, wide-eared, mild-eyed. He is my running mate, sir, and we run sometimes, now this way, now that, but always at your service, Mr. Renault."

"Are you drunk, or is it a pretense?" I demanded.

"Not *too* drunk," he replied, with elaborate emphasis. "But once this matter of Thendara is settled I hope to be so drunk that no friend of mine need be ashamed of me. Good day, sir. God save our country!"

"Have a care," I motioned, turning away. And

so I left him to enter the shop and purchase a trinket, thinking it prudent in case any passer-by had observed how long I lingered.

July 16th.—Sir Peter not yet returned from Mr. Rutgers. The name "Thendara" ringing in my ears like a dull bell all night, and I awake, lying there a-thinking. Somewhere, in some long-forgotten year, I had heard a whispering echo of that name—or so it seemed to me—and, musing, I thought to savor a breeze from the pines, and hear water flowing, unseen, far in the forest silence.

Thendara! Thendara!

The name is not Iroquois—yet it may be, too—a soft, gracious trisyllable stolen from the Lenape. Lord! how the name intrigues me, sweetly sonorous, throbbing in my ears—Thendara, Thendara—and always I hear the pine breeze high blowing and the flowing undertone of waters.

July 17th.—Nothing extraordinary. The Hon. Elsin Grey arrived from Halifax by the Swan packet to visit Sir Peter's family, she being cousin twice removed to Lady Coleville. I have not seen her; she keeps her chamber with the migraine. As she comes from her kinsman, General Sir Frederick Haldimand, Governor of Canada, she may be useful, being lately untethered from the convent and no more than seventeen or eighteen, and vain, no doubt, of her beauty, and so, I conclude, prone to babble if flattered.

Here my journal ended; I dipped my quill into the inkhorn and wrote slowly:

July 18th.—Nothing remarkable. The Hon. Elsin Grey still keeps her chamber. The heat in New York is very great. I am, without suspicion, sending money through Ennis to our prisoners aboard the ships in the Wallabout, and next week shall have more for the unfortunates in the Provost, the prisons, jails, and the sugar-house—my salary being due on the 20th inst. I have ever in mind a plan for a general jail delivery the instant his Excellency assaults by land and sea, but at present it is utterly hopeless, Mr. Cunningham executing the laws with terrible rigor, and double guards patrolling the common. As for those wretched patriots aboard the "*Hell*" and on those hulks—the *Falconer*, *Good Hope*, and *Scorpion*—which lie southeast of the *Jersey*, there can be no delivery save through compassion of that Dark Jailer who one day shall free us all.

I dropped my pen, listening intently. Close to my door the garret stairs creaked, ever so lightly; and I bent forward across the table, gathering my papers, on which the ink lay still wet.

Listening, I heard nothing more. Perhaps the great heat was warping the new stairway, which led past my door, up through the attic, and out to the railed cupola upon the roof.

I glanced at my journal; there was nothing more to add, and so, sanding the sheets, I laid them back behind the swinging panel which I myself had fashioned so cunningly that none might suspect a cupboard in the simple wainscot. Then to wash hands and face in fresh water, and put on my coat without the waistcoat, pre-

pared to take the air on the cupola, where it should soon blow cool from the bay.

Slipping lock and bolt, I paused, hand on the knob, to glance back around the room—a habit formed of caution. Then, satisfied, I opened the door and left it standing wide so that the room might air. As I ascended the attic stairs a little fresh puff of wind cooled me. Doubtless a servant had opened the flaps to the cupola, for they were laid back; and as I mounted, I could see a square of blue sky overhead.

I had taken my pipe, and paused on the stairs to light it; then, pouching flint and tinder-box, I emerged upon the roof, to find myself face to face with a young girl I had never before seen—the Hon. Miss Grey, no doubt—and very dainty in her powder and one coquette patch that emphasized the slow color tinting a skin of snow.

My bow, I think, covered my vexation—I being all unpowdered and wearing no waistcoat over an unfrilled shirt, for I do love fine clothes when circumstances require; but the lady was none the less punctilious, and as I made to toss my pipe into the street below, she forbade me with perfect courtesy and a smile that only accented her youthful self-possession.

"Mr. Renault need neither retire nor sacrifice his pleasure," she said. "I have missed Sir Frederick's pipe-smoke dreadfully—so much, indeed, that I had even thought to try Sir Peter's snuff to soothe me."

"Shall I fetch it, madam?" I asked instantly; but she raised a small hand in laughing horror.

"Snuff and picquet I am preparing for—a youth

of folly—an old age of snuff and cards, you know. At present folly suffices, thank you."

And as I stood smiling before her, she said: "Pray you be seated, sir, if you so desire. There should be sufficient air for two in this half-charred furnace which you call New York. Tell me, Mr. Renault, are the winters here also extreme in cold?"

"Sometimes," I said. "Last winter the bay was frozen to Staten Island so that the artillery crossed on the ice from the city."

She turned her head, looking out over the water, which was now all a golden sparkle under the westering sun. Then her eyes dropped to the burned district—that waste of blackened ruins stretching south along Broadway to Beaver Street and west to Greenwich Street.

"Is that the work of rebels?" she asked, frowning.

"No, madam; it was an accident."

"Why do the New Yorkers not rebuild?"

"I think it is because General Washington interrupts local improvements," I said, laughing.

She looked around at me, pretty brows raised in quaint displeasure.

"Does the insolence of a rebel really amuse you, Mr. Renault?"

I was taken aback. Even among the British officers here in the city it had become the fashion to speak respectfully of the enemy, and above all of his Excellency.

"Why should it not amuse me?" I asked lightly.

She had moved her head again, and appeared to be absorbed in the view. Presently she said, still looking

out over the city: "That was a noble church once, that blackened arch across the way."

"That is Trinity—all that is left of it," I said. "St. Paul's is still standing—you may see it there to the north, just west of Ann Street and below Vesey."

She turned, leaning on the railing, following with curious eyes the direction of my outstretched arm.

"Please tell me more about this furnace you call a city, Mr. Renault," she said, with a pretty inflection of voice that flattered; and so I went over beside her, and, leaning there on the cupola rail together, we explored the damaged city from our bird's perch above it—the city that I had come to care for strangely, nay, to love almost as I loved my Mohawk hills. For it is that way with New York, the one city that we may love without disloyalty to our birthplace, a city which is home in a larger sense, and, in a sense, almost as dear to men as the birth-spot which all cherish. I know not why, but this is so; no American is long strange here; for it is the great hearth of the mother-land where the nation gathers as a family, each conscious of a share in the heritage established for all by all.

And so, together, this fair young English girl and I traced out the wards numbered from the cardinal points of the compass, and I bounded for her the Out-Ward, too, and the Dock-Ward. There was no haze, only a living golden light, clear as topaz, and we could see plainly the sentinels pacing before the Bridewell—that long two-storied prison, built of gloomy stone; and next to it the Almshouse of gray stone, and next to that the massive rough stone prison, three stories

high, where in a cupola an iron bell hung, black against the sky.

"You will hear it, some day, tolling for an execution," I said.

"Do they hang rebels there?" she asked, looking up at me so wonderingly, so innocently that I stood silent instead of answering, surprised at such beauty in a young girl's eyes.

"Where is King's College?" she asked. I showed her the building bounded by Murray, Chapel, Barckley and Church streets, and then I pointed out the upper barracks behind the jail, and the little lake beyond divided by a neck of land on which stood the powder-house.

Far across the West Ward I could see the windows of Mr. Lispenard's mansion shining in the setting sun, and the road to Greenwich winding along the river.

She tired of my instruction after a while, and her eyes wandered to the bay. A few ships lay off Paulus Hook; the Jersey shore seemed very near, although full two miles distant, and the islands, too, seemed close inshore where the white wings of gulls flashed distantly.

A jack flew from the Battery, another above the fort, standing out straight in the freshening breeze from the bay. Far away across the East River I saw the accursed *Jersey* swinging, her black, filthy bulwarks gilded by the sun; and below, her devil's brood of hulks at anchor, all with the wash hung out on deck a-drying in the wind.

"What are they?" she asked, surprising something else than the fixed smile of deference in my face.

"Prison ships, madam. Yonder the rebels die all night, all day, week after week, year after year. That black hulk you see yonder—the one to the east—stripped clean, with nothing save a derrick for bowsprit and a signal-pole for mast, is the *Jersey*, called by another name, sometimes——"

"What name?"

"Some call her '*The Hell*,'" I answered. And, after a pause: "It must be hot aboard, with every porthole nailed."

"What can rebels expect?" she asked calmly.

"Exactly! There are some thousand and more aboard the *Jersey*. When the wind sets from the south, on still mornings, I have heard a strange moaning—a low, steady, monotonous plaint, borne inland over the city. But, as you say, what can rebels expect, madam?"

"What is that moaning sound you say that one may hear?" she demanded.

"Oh, the rebels, dying from suffocation—clamoring for food, perhaps—perhaps for water! It is hard on the guards who have to go down every morning into that reeking, stifling hold and drag out the dead rebels festering there——"

"But that is horrible!" she broke out, blue eyes wide with astonishment—then, suddenly silent, she gazed at me full in the face. "It is incredible," she said quietly; "it is another rebel tale. Tell me, am I not right?"

I did not answer; I was thinking how I might use her, and the thought was not agreeable. She was so

lovely in her fresh young womanhood, so impulsive and yet so self-possessed, so utterly ignorant of what was passing in this war-racked land of mine, that I hesitated to go gleaning here for straws of information.

"In the north," she said, resting her cheek on one slender wrist, "we hear much of rebel complaint, but make nothing of it, knowing well that if cruelty exists its home is not among those sturdy men who are fighting for their King."

"You speak warmly," I said, smiling.

"Yes—warmly. We have heard Sir John Johnson slandered because he uses the Iroquois. But do not the rebels use them, too? My kinsman, General Haldimand, says that not only do the rebels employ the Oneidas, but that their motley congress enlists any Indian who will take their paper dollars."

"That is true," I said.

"Then why should we not employ Brant and his Indians?" she asked innocently. "And why do the rebels cry out every time Butler's Rangers take the field? We in Canada know Captain Walter Butler and his father, Colonel John Butler. Why, Mr. Renault, there is no more perfectly accomplished officer and gentleman than Walter Butler. I know him; I have danced with him at Quebec and at Niagara. How can even a rebel so slander him with these monstrous tales of massacre and torture and scalps taken from women and children at Cherry Valley?" She raised her flushed face to mine and looked at me earnestly.

"Why even our own British officers have been disturbed by these slanders," she said, "and I think Sir

Henry Clinton half believes that our Royal Greens and Rangers are merciless marauders, and that Walter Butler is a demon incarnate."

"I admit," said I, "that we here in New York have doubted the mercy of the Butlers and Sir John Johnson."

"Then let me paint these gentlemen for you," she said quickly.

"But they say these gentlemen are capable of painting themselves," I observed, tempted to excite her by the hint that the Rangers smeared their faces like painted Iroquois at their hellish work.

"Oh, how shameful!" she cried, with a little gesture of horror. "What do you think us, there in Canada? Because our officers must needs hold a wilderness for the King, do you of New York believe us savages?"

The generous animation, the quick color, charmed me. She was no longer English, she was Canadienne—jealous of Canadian reputation, quick to resent, sensitive, proud—heart and soul believing in the honor of her own people of the north.

"Let me picture for you these gentlemen whom the rebels cry out upon," she said. "Sir John Johnson is a mild, slow man, somewhat sluggish and overheavy, moderate in speech, almost cold, perhaps, yet a perfectly gallant officer."

"His father was a wise and honest gentleman before him," I said sincerely. "Is his son, Sir John, like him?"

She nodded, and went on to deal with old John But-

ler—nor did I stay her to confess that these Johnsons and Butlers were no strangers to me, whose blackened Broadalbin home lay a charred ruin to attest the love that old John Butler bore my family name.

And so I stood, smiling and silent, while she spoke of Walter Butler, describing him vividly, even to his amber black eyes and his pale face, and the poetic melancholy with which he clothed the hidden blood-lust that smoldered under his smooth pale skin. But there you have it—young, proud, and melancholy—and he had danced with her at Niagara, too, and—if I knew him—he had not spared her hints of that impetuous flame that burned for all pure women deep in the blackened pit of his own damned soul.

"Did you know his wife?" I asked, smiling.

"Walter Butler's—wife!" she gasped, turning on me, white as death.

There was a silence; she drew a long, deep breath; suddenly, the gayest, sweetest little laugh followed, but it was slowly that the color returned to lip and cheek.

"Is he not wedded?" I asked carelessly—the damned villain—at his Mohawk Valley tricks again! —and again she laughed, which was, no doubt, my wordless answer.

"Does he dance well, this melancholy Ranger?" I asked, smiling to see her laugh.

"Divinely, sir. I think no gentleman in New York can move a minuet with Walter Butler's grace. Oh, you New Yorkers! You think we are nothing—fit, perhaps, for a May-pole frolic with the rustic gentry! Do

not deny it, Mr. Renault. Have we not heard you on the subject? Do not your officers from Philadelphia and New York come mincing and tiptoeing through Halifax and Quebec, all smiling and staring about, quizzing glasses raised? And—'Very pretty! monstrous charming! spike me, but the ladies powder here!' And, 'Is this green grass? Damme, where's the snow—and the polar bears, you know?'"

I laughed as she paused, breathlessly scornful, flushed with charming indignation.

"And is not Canada all snow?" I asked, to tease her.

"Snow! It is sweet and green and buried in flowers!" she cried.

"In winter, madam?"

"Oh! You mean to plague me, which is impertinent, because I do not know you well enough—I have not known you above half an hour. I shall tell Lady Coleville."

"So shall I—how you abuse us all here in New York——"

"I did not. You are teasing me again, Mr. Renault."

Defiant, smiling, her resentment was, after all, only partly real.

"We are becoming friends much too quickly to suit me," she said deliberately.

"But not half quickly enough to suit me," I said.

"Do you fancy that I take that silly speech as compliment, Mr. Renault?"

"Ah, no, madam! On such brief acquaintance I

dare not presume to offer you the compliments that burn for utterance!"

"But you *do* presume to plague me—on such brief acquaintance!" she observed.

"I am punished," I said contritely.

"No, you are not! You are not punished at all, because I don't know how to, and—I am not sure I wish to punish you, Mr. Renault."

"Madam?"

"If you look at me so meekly I shall laugh. Besides, it is hypocritical. There is nothing meek about you!" I bowed more meekly than ever.

"Mr. Renault?"

"Madam?"

She picked up her plumed fan impatiently and snapped it open.

"If you don't stop being meek and answering 'Madam' I shall presently go distracted. Call me something else—anything—just to see how we like it. Tell me, do you know my first name?"

"Elsin," I said softly, and to my astonishment a faint, burning sensation stung my cheeks, growing warmer and warmer. I think she was astonished, too, for few men at twenty-three could color up in those days; and there was I, a hardened New Yorker of four years' adoption, turning pink like a great gaby at a country fair when his sweetheart meets him at the ginger bower!

To cover my chagrin I nodded coolly, repeating her name with a critical air—"Elsin," I mused, outwardly foppish, inwardly amazed and mad—"Elsin—

um! ah!—very pretty—very unusual," I added, with a patronizing nod.

She did not resent it; when at last I made bold to meet her gaze it was pensive and serene, yet I felt somehow that her innocent blue eyes had taken my measure as a man—and not to my advantage.

"Your name is not a usual one," she said. "When I first heard it from Sir Peter I laughed."

"Why?" I said coldly.

"Why? Oh, I don't know, Mr. Renault! It sounded so very young—Carus Renault—it sounds so young and guileless——"

Speechless with indignation, I caught a glimmer under the lowered lids that mocked me, and I saw her mouth quiver with the laugh fluttering for freedom.

She looked up, all malice, and the pent laughter rippled.

"Very well," I said, giving in, "I shall take no pity on you in future."

"My dear Mr. Renault, do you think I require your pity?"

"Not now," I said, chagrined. "But one day you may cry out for mercy——"

"Which you will doubtless accord, being a gallant gentleman and no Mohawk."

"Oh, I can be a barbarian, too, for I am, by adoption, an Oneida of the Wolf Clan, and entitled to a seat in Council."

"I see," she said, "you wear your hair à l'Iroquois."

I reddened again; I could not help it, knowing my hair was guiltless of powder and all awry.

"If I had supposed you were here, do you imagine I should have presented myself unpowdered and without a waistcoat?" I said, exasperated.

Her laughter made it no easier, though I strove to retrieve myself and return to the light badinage she had routed me from. Lord, what a tease was in this child, with her deep blue eyes and her Dresden porcelain skin of snow and roses!

"Now," she said, recovering her gravity, "you may return to your letter-writing, Mr. Renault. I have done with you for the moment."

At that I was sobered in a trice.

"What letter-writing?" I made out to answer calmly.

"Were you not hard at work penning a missive to some happy soul who enjoys your confidence?"

"Why do you believe I was?" I asked.

She tossed her head airily. "Oh! for that matter, I could even tell you what you wrote: 'Nothing remarkable; the Hon. Elsin Grey still keeps her chamber'—did you not write that?"

She paused, the smile fading from her face. Perhaps she thought she had gone too far, perhaps something in my expression startled her.

"I beg your pardon," she said quickly; "have I hurt you, Mr. Renault?"

"How did you know I wrote that?" I asked in a voice I hoped was steady.

"Why, it is there on your shirt, Mr. Renault, im-

printed backward from the wet ink. I have amused myself by studying it out letter by letter. Please forgive me—it was dreadfully indiscreet—but I only meant to torment you."

I looked down, taking my fine lawn shirt in both hands. There was the impression—my own writing, backward, but distinct. I remembered when I had done it, when I had gathered my ink-wet papers under my arms and leaned forward to listen to the creaking of the attic stairway. Suppose it had been Sir Peter! Suppose the imprint had been something that could have admitted of but one interpretation? I turned cold at the thought.

She was watching me all the while, a trifle uneasy at my silence, but my smile and manner reassured her, and my gaiety she met instantly.

"I am overwhelmed," I said, "and can offer no excuse for this frowsy dress. If you had any idea how mortified I am you would have mercy on me."

"My hair not being dressed à l'Iroquois, I consent to show you mercy," she said. "But you came monstrous near frightening me, too. Do you know you turned white, Mr. Renault? Lud! the vanity of men, to pale at a jest touching their status in fopdom as proper macaroni!"

"I do love to appear well," I said resentfully.

"Now do you expect me to assure you that you *do* appear well? that even the dress of a ragged forest-runner would detract nothing from your person? Ah, I shall say nothing of the sort, Mr. Renault! Doubtless there are women a-plenty in New York to flatter you."

"No," I said; "they prefer scarlet coats and spurs, as you will, too."

"No doubt," she said, turning her head to the sunset.

There was enough wind to flutter the ribbons on her shoulders and bare neck, and to stir the tendrils of her powdered hair, a light breeze blowing steadily from the bay as the sun went down into the crimson flood. Bang! A cloud of white smoke hung over Pearl Street where the evening gun had spoken; the flag on the fort fluttered down, the flag on the battery followed. Out on the darkening river a lanthorn glimmered from the deck of the *Jersey;* a light sparkled on Paulus Hook.

"Hark! hear the drums!" she murmured. Far down Broadway the British drums sounded, nearer, nearer, now loud along Dock Street, now lost in Queen, then swinging west by north they came up Broad, into Wall; and I could hear the fifes shrilling out, "The World turned Upside-down," and the measured tread of the patrol, marching to the Upper Barracks and the Prison.

The drummers wheeled into Broadway beneath our windows; leaning over I saw them pass, and I was aware of something else, too—a great strapping figure in a drover's smock, watching the British drums from the side path across the way—my friend of Nassau Street—and clinging to his arm, a little withered man, wrinkled, mild-eyed, clad also like a drover, and snapping his bull-whip to accent the rhythm of the rolling drums.

"I think I shall go down," said a soft voice beside

me; "pray do not move, Mr. Renault, you are so picturesque in silhouette against the sunset—and I hear that silhouettes are so fashionable in New York fopdom."

I bowed; she held out her hand—just a trifle, as she passed me, the gesture of a coquette or of perfect innocence—and I touched it lightly with finger-tip and lip.

"Until supper," she said—"and, Mr. Renault, do you suppose we shall have bread for supper?"

"Why not?" I asked, all unsuspicious.

"Because I fancied flour might be scarce in New York"—she glanced at my unpowdered head, then fled, her blue eyes full of laughter.

It is true that all hair powder is made of flour, but I did not use it like a Hessian. And I looked after her with an uncertain smile and with a respect born of experience and grave uncertainty.

CHAPTER II

THE HOUSEHOLD

About dusk Sir Peter arrived from lower Westchester while I was dressing. Warned by the rattle of wheels from the coach-house at the foot of the garden, and peering through the curtains, I saw the lamps shining and heard the trample of our horses on the stable floor; and presently, as I expected, Sir Peter came a-knocking at my door, and my servant left the dressing of my hair to admit the master of the house. He came in, his handsome face radiant—a tall, graceful man of forty, clothed with that elegant carelessness which we call perfection, so strikingly unobtrusive was his dress, so faultless and unstudied his bearing.

There was no dust upon him, though he had driven miles; his clean skin was cool and pleasantly tinted with the sun of summer, spotless his lace at cuff and throat, and the buckles flashed at stock and knee and shoe as he passed through the candle-light to lay a familiar hand upon my shoulder.

"What's new, Carus?" he asked, and his voice had ever that pleasant undertone of laughter which endears. "You villain, have you been making love to Elsin Grey, that she should come babbling of Mr. Renault, Mr. Renault, Mr. Renault ere I had set foot in

my own hallway? It was indecent, I tell you—not a word for me, civil or otherwise, not a question how I had 'scaped the Skinners at Kingsbridge—only a flutter of ribbons and a pair of pretty hands to kiss, and 'Oh, Cousin Coleville! Is Mr. Renault kin to me, too?—for I so take it, having freely bantered him to advantage at first acquaintance. Was I bold, cousin? —but if you only knew how he tempted me—and he *is* kin to you, is he not?—and you are Cousin Betty's husband.' 'God-a-mercy!' said I, 'what's all this about Mr. Renault?—a rogue and a villain I shame to claim as kin, a swaggering, diceing, cock-fighting ruffler, a-raking it from the Out-Ward to Jew Street! Madam, do you dare admit to me that you have found aught to attract you in the company of this monument of foppery known as Carus Renault?'"

"Did you truly say that, Sir Peter?" I asked, wincing while my ears grew hot.

"Say it? I did not say it, I bellowed it!" He shrugged his shoulders and took snuff with an air. "The minx finds you agreeable," he observed; "why? —God knows!"

"I had not thought so," I said, in modest deprecation, yet warming at his words.

"Oh—had not thought so!" he mimicked, mincing over to the dressing-table and surveying the array of perfumes and pomades and curling irons. "Carus, you shameless rake, you've robbed all Queen Street! Essence, pomade-de-grasse, almond paste, bergamot, orange, French powder! By Heaven, man, do you mean to take the lady by storm or set up a rival shop

to Smith's 'Sign of the Rose'? Here, have your man leave those two puffs above the ears; curl them loosely —that's it! Now tie that queue-ribbon soberly; leave the flamboyant papillon style to those damned Lafayettes and Rochambeaux! Now dust your master, Dennis, and fetch a muslinet waistcoat—the silver tambour one. Gad, Carus, I'd make a monstrous fine success at decorating fops for a guinea a head—eh?"

He inspected me through his quizzing glass, nodded, backed away in feigned rapture, and presently sat down by the window, stretching his well-shaped legs.

"Damme," he said, "I meant to ask what's new, but you chatter on so that I have no chance for a word edgeways. Now, what the devil is new with you?"

"Nothing remarkable," I said, laughing. "Did you come to terms with Mr. Rutgers for his meadows?"

"No," he replied irritably, "and I care nothing for his damned swamps full of briers and mud and woodcock."

"It is just as well," I said. "You can not afford more land at present."

"That's true," he admitted cheerfully; "I'm spending too much. Gad, Carus, the Fifty-fourth took it out of us at that thousand-guinea main! Which reminds me to say that our birds at Flatbush are in prime condition and I've matched them."

I looked up at him doubtfully. Our birds had brought him nothing but trouble so far.

"Let it pass," he said, noticing my silent disapproval; "we'll talk to Horrock in the morning. Which

reminds me that I have no money." He laughed, drew a paper from his coat, and unfolding it, read aloud:

"1 pipe Madeira @ £90 per pipe—£90
1 pipe Port @ £46 per pipe—£46
20 gallons Fayal @ 5s. per gal.—
20 gallons Lisbon @ 5s. per gal.—
10 gallons Windward I. rum @ 4s. per gal."

He yawned and tossed the paper on my dresser, saying, "Pay it, Carus. If our birds win the main we'll put the Forty-fifth under the table, and I'll pay a few debts."

Standing there he stretched to his full graceful height, yawning once or twice. "I'll go bathe, and dress for supper," he said; "that should freshen me. Shall we rake it to-night?"

"I'm for cards," I said carelessly.

"*With* Elsin Grey or *without* Elsin Grey?" he inquired in affected earnestness.

"If you had witnessed her treatment of me," I retorted, "you'd never mistake it for friendly interest. We'll rake it, if you like. There's another frolic at the John Street Theater. The Engineers play 'The Conscious Lovers,' and Rosamund Barry sings 'Vain is Beauty's Gaudy Flower.'"

But he said he had no mind for the Theater Royal that night, and presently left me to Dennis and the mirror.

In the mirror I saw a boyish youth of twenty-three, dark-eyed, somewhat lean of feature, and tinted with that olive smoothness of skin inherited from the Renaults

through my great-grandfather—a face which in repose was a trifle worn, not handsome, but clearly cut, though not otherwise remarkable. It was, I believed, neither an evil nor a sullen brooding face, nor yet a face in which virtue molds each pleasing feature so that its goodness is patent to the world.

Dennis having ended his ministrations, I pinned a brilliant at my throat—a gift from Lady Coleville—and shook over it the cobweb lace so it should sparkle like a star through a thin cloud. Then passing my small sword through the embroidered slashing of my coat, and choosing a handkerchief discreetly perfumed, I regarded myself at ease, thinking of Elsin Grey.

In the light of later customs and fashions I fear that I was something of a fop, though I carried neither spy-glass nor the two watches sacred to all fops. But if I loved dress, so did his Excellency, and John Hancock, not to name a thousand better men than I; and while I confess that I did and do dearly love to cut a respectable figure, frippery for its own sake was not among my vices; but I hold him a hind who, if he can afford it, dresses not to please others and do justice to the figure that a generous Creator has so patiently fashioned. "To please others!" sang my French blood within me; "to please myself!" echoed my English blood—and so, betwixt the sanguine tides, I was minded to please in one way or another, nor thought it a desire unworthy. One thing did distress me: what with sending all my salary to the prisons, I had no money left to bet as gentlemen bet, nor to back a well-heeled bird, nor to color my fancy for a horse. As

for a mistress, or for those fugitive affairs of the heart which English fashion countenanced—nay, on which fashion insisted—I had no part in them, and brooked much banter from the gay world in consequence. It was not merely lack of money, nor yet a certain fastidiousness implanted, nor yet the inherent shrinking of my English blood from pleasure forbidden, for my Renault blood was hot enough, God wot! It was, I think, all of these reasons that kept me untainted, and another, the vague idea of a woman, somewhere in the world, who should be worth an unsullied love—worth far more than the best I might bring to her one day. And so my pride refused to place me in debt to a woman whom I had never known.

As for money, I had my salary when it was convenient for Sir Peter; I had a small income of my own, long pledged to Colonel Willett's secret uses. It was understood that Sir Peter should find me in apparel; I had credit at Sir Peter's tailor, and at his hatter's and bootmaker's, too. Twice a year my father sent me from Paris a sum which was engaged to maintain a bed or two in the Albany hospital for our soldiers. I make no merit of it, for others gave more. So, it is plain to see I had no money for those fashionable vices in the midst of which I lived, and if I lost five shillings at whist I felt that I had robbed some wretched creature on the *Jersey*, or dashed the cup from some poor devil's lips who lay a-gasping in the city prison.

My finery, then, was part and parcel of my salary—my salary in guineas already allotted; so it came about that I moved in a loose and cynical society, untainted

only through force of circumstance and a pride that accepts nothing which it may not return at interest.

When I descended to the dining-room I found all seated, and so asked pardon of Lady Coleville, who was gay and amiable as usual, and, "for a penance," as she said, made me sit beside her. That was no penance, for she was a beauty and a wit, her dainty head swimming with harmless mischief; and besides knowing me as she did, she was monstrous amusing in a daring yet delicate fashion, which she might not use with any other save her husband.

That, as I say, was therefore no penance, but my punishment was to see Elsin Grey far across the table on Sir Peter's right, and to find in my other neighbor a lady whose sole delight in me was to alternately shock me with broad pleasantries and torment me with my innocence.

Rosamund Barry was her name, Captain Barry's widow—he who fell at Breeds Hill in '76—the face of a Madonna, and the wicked wit of a lady whose name she bore, *sans La du.*

"Carus," she said, leaning too near me and waving her satin painted fan, "is it true you have deserted me for a fairer conquest?"

"The rumor nails itself to the pillory," I said; "who is fairer than you, Rosamund?"

"You beg the question," she said severely, the while her dark eyes danced a devil's shadow dance; "if you dare go tiptoeing around the skirts of the Hon. Miss Grey, I'll tell her all—*all,* mind you!"

"Don't do that," I said, "unless you mean to leave New York."

"All about *you*, silly!" she said, flushing in spite of her placid smile.

"Oh," I said, with an air of great relief, "I was sure you could not contemplate confession!"

She laid her pretty head on one side. "I wonder," she mused, eying me deliberately—"I wonder what this new insolence of yours might indicate. Is it rebellion? Has the worm turned?"

"The worm has turned—into a frivolous butterfly," I said gaily.

"I don't believe it," she said. "Let me see if I can make you blush, Carus!" And she leaned nearer, whispering behind her fan.

"Let me match that!" I said coolly. "Lend me your fan, Rosamund——"

"Carus!" exclaimed Lady Coleville, "stop it! Mercy on us, such shameless billing and cooing! Captain O'Neil, call him out!"

"Faith," said O'Neil, "to call is wan thing, and the chune Mrs. Barry sings is another. Take shame, Carus Renault, ye blatherin', bould inthriguer! L'ave innocence to yer betthers!"

"To me, for example," observed Captain Harkness complacently. "Mrs. Barry knows that raking fellow, Carus, and she knows you, too, you wild Irishman——"

"If you only keep this up long enough, gentlemen," I said, striving to smile, "you'll end by doing what I've so far avoided."

"Ruining his reputation in Miss Grey's eyes," explained Lady Coleville pleasantly.

Elsin Grey looked calmly across at me, saying to Sir Peter, "He *is* too young to do such things, isn't he?"

That set them into fits of laughter, Sir Peter begging me to pause in my mad career and consider the chief end of man, and Tully O'Neil generously promising moral advice and the spiritual support of Rosamund Barry, which immediately diverted attention from me to a lightning duel of words between Rosamund and O'Neil—parry and thrust, innuendo and eloquent silence, until Lady Coleville in pantomime knocked up the crossed blades of wit, and Sir Peter vowed that this was no place for an innocent married man.

When Lady Coleville rose we drew our swords and arched a way for her, and she picked up her silken petticoat and ran under, laughing, one hand pressed to her ears to shut out the cheers.

There were long black Spanish cigars, horribly strong, served with spirits after the ladies had left. O'Neil and Harkness used them; Sir Peter and I accepted the long cool pipes, and we settled for a comfortable smoke.

Sir Peter spoke of the coming cock-fight with characteristic optimism—not shared by Harkness, and but partially approved by O'Neil. Details were solemnly discussed, questions of proper heeling, of silver and steel gaffs, of comb and wattle cutting, of the texture of feather and hackle, and of the "walks" at Flatbush and Horrock's method of feeding in the dark.

Tiring of the subject, Harkness spoke of the political outlook and took a gloomy view, paying his Excellency a compliment by referring to him as "no fox, but a full-grown wolf, with an appetite for a continent and perhaps for a hemisphere."

"Pooh!" said Sir Peter, lazily sucking at his pipe, "Sir Henry has him holed. We'll dig him out before snow flies."

"What folly, Sir Peter!" remonstrated Harkness, leaning forward so that the candle-light blazed on his gold and scarlet coat. "Look back five years, Sir Peter, then survey the damnable situation now! Do you realize that to-day England governs but one city in America?"

"Wait," observed Sir Peter serenely, expelling a cloud of smoke so that it wreathed his handsome head in a triple halo.

"Wait? Faith, if there's annything else to do but wait I'll take that job!" exclaimed O'Neil ruefully.

"Why don't you take it, then?" retorted Sir Peter. "It's no secret, I fancy—that plan of Walter Butler's —is it?" he added, seeing that we knew nothing of any plan.

"Sir Henry makes no secret of it," he continued; "it's talked over and disparaged openly at mess and at headquarters. I can see no indiscretion in mentioning it here."

It was at such moments that I felt a loathing for myself, and such strong self-disgust must surely have prevailed in the end to make me false to duty if, as I have said, I had not an absolute faith that his Excel-

lency required no man to tarnish his honor for the motherland's salvation.

"What's afoot?" inquired Harkness curiously.

"Why, you remember how the rebel General Sullivan went through the Six Nations, devastating the Iroquois country, laying waste, burning, destroying their orchards and crops—which, after all, accomplished the complete destruction of our own granary in the North?"

"'Twas a dhirty thrick!" muttered O'Neil. "Sure, 'tis the poor naked haythen will pay that score wan day, or I'm a Hessian!"

"They'll pay it soon if Walter Butler has his way," said Sir Peter. "Sir John Johnson and the Butlers and Colonel Ross are gathering in the North. Haldimand's plan is to strike at the rebels' food supply—the cultivated region from Johnstown south and west—do what Sullivan did, lay waste the rebel grain belt, burn fodder, destroy all orchards—God! it will go hard with the frontier again." He swung around to Harkness: "It's horrible to me, Captain—and Walter Butler not yet washed clean of the blood of Cherry Valley. I tell you, loyal as I am, humble subject of my King, whom I reverence, I affirm that this blackened, blood-soaked frontier is a barrier to England which she can never, never overcome, and though we win out to-day, and though we hang the rebels thick as pears in Lispenard's orchards, that barrier will remain, year by year fencing us in, crowding us back to the ocean, to our ships, back to the land from whence we English came. And for all time will the memory of these horrors set Amer-

ica's face against us—if not for all time, yet our children's children and their children shall not outlive the tradition burned into the heart of this quivering land we hold to-day, half shackled, still struggling, already rising to its bleeding knees."

"Gad!" breathed O'Neil, "'tis threason ye come singin' to the chune o' Yankee Doodle-doo, Sir Peter."

"It's sense," said Sir Peter, already smiling at his own heat.

"So Ross and the Butlers are to strike at the rebel granaries?" repeated Harkness, musing.

"Yes; they're gathering on the eastern lakes and at Niagara—Butler's Rangers, Johnson's Greens, Brant's Iroquois, some Jägers, a few regulars, and the usual partizan band of painted whites who disgrace us all, by Heaven! But there," added Sir Peter, smiling, "I've done with the vapors. I bear no arms, and it is unfit that I should judge those who do. Only," and his voice rang a little, "I understand battles, not butchery. Gentlemen, to the British Army! the regulars, God bless 'em! Bumpers, gentlemen!"

I heard O'Neil muttering, as he smacked his lips after the toast, "And to hell with the Hessians! Bad cess to the Dootch scuts!"

"Did you say the rendezvous is at Niagara?" inquired Harkness.

"I've heard so. I've heard, too, of some other spot—an Indian name—Thend—Thend—plague take it! Ah, I have it—Thendara. You know it, Carus?" he asked, turning so suddenly on me that my guilty heart ceased beating for a second.

"I have heard of it," I said, finding a voice scarce like my own. "Where is it, Sir Peter?"

"Why, here in New York there has ever been a fable about a lost town in the wilderness called Thendara. I never knew it to be true; but now they say that Walter Butler has assigned Thendara as his gathering place, or so it is reported in a letter to Sir Henry, which Sir Henry read to me. Have *you* no knowledge of it, Carus?"

"None at all. I remember hearing the name in childhood. Perhaps better woodsmen than I know where this Thendara lies, but I do not."

"It must lie somewhere betwixt us and Canada," said Harkness vaguely. "Does not Sir Henry know?"

"He said he did not," replied Sir Peter, "and he sent out a scout for information. No information has arrived. Is it an Iroquois word, Carus?"

"I think it is of Lenape origin," I said—"perhaps modified by the Mohawk tongue. I know it is not pure Oneida."

Harkness glanced at me curiously. "You'd make a rare scout," he said, "with your knowledge of the barbarians."

"The wonder is," observed Sir Peter, "that he is not a scout on the other side. If my home had been burned by the McDonalds and the Butlers, I'm damned if I should forget which side did it!"

"If I took service with the rebels," said I, "it would not be because of personal loss. Nor would that same private misfortune deter me from serving King George.

The men who burned my home represent no great cause. When I have leisure I can satisfy personal quarrels."

"Lord!" laughed Sir Peter, "to hear you bewail your lack of leisure one might think you are now occupied with one cause or t'other. Pray, my dear Carus, when do you expect to find time to call out these enemies of yours?"

"You wouldn't have me deprive the King of Walter Butler's services, would you?" I asked so gravely that everybody laughed, and we rose in good humor to join the ladies in the drawing-rooms.

Sir Peter's house on Wall Street had been English built, yet bore certain traces of the old Dutch influence, for it had a stoop leading to the front door, and the roof was Dutch, save for the cupola; a fine wide house, the façade a little scorched from the conflagration of '78 which had ruined Trinity Church and the Lutheran, and many fine buildings and homes.

The house was divided by a wide hallway, on either side of which were drawing-rooms, and in the rear of these was a dining-room giving on a conservatory which overlooked the gardens. The ground floor served as a servant's hall, with a door at the area and another in the rear leading out through the garden-drive to the stables.

The floor above the drawing-rooms had been divided into two suites, one in gold leather and blue for Sir Peter and his lady, the other in crimson damask for guests. The third floor, mine, was similarly divided, I occupying the Wall Street side, with windows on that fashionable street and also on Broadway.

Thus it happened that, instead of entering the south drawing-room where I saw the ladies at the card-table playing Pharaoh, I turned to the right and crossed the north, or "state drawing-room," and parted the curtains, looking across Broadway to see if I might spy my friend the drover and his withered little mate. No doubt prudence and a dislike for the patrol kept them off Broadway at that hour, for I could not see them, although a few street lamps were lit and I could make out wayfarers as far north as Crown Street.

Standing there in the dimly lighted room, my nose between the parted curtains, I heard my name pronounced very gently behind me, and, turning, beheld Miss Grey, half lying on a sofa in a distant corner. I had not seen her when I entered, my back being turned to the east, and I said so, asking pardon for an unintentional rudeness—which she pardoned with a smile, slowly waving her scented fan.

"I am a little tired," she said; "the voyage from Halifax was rough, and I have small love for the sea, so, Lady Coleville permitting, I came in here to rest from the voices and the glare of too bright candle-light. Pray you be seated, Mr. Renault—if it does not displease you. What were you looking for from the window yonder?"

"Treason," I said gaily. "But the patrol should be able to see to that. May I sit here a moment?"

"Willingly; I like men."

Innocence or coquetry, I was clean checked. Her white eyelids languidly closing over the pure eyes of a child gave me no clue.

"All men?" I inquired.

"How silly! No, very few men. But that is because I only know a few."

"And may I dare to hope that—" I began in stilted gallantry, cut short by her opening eyes and smile. "Of course I like you, Mr. Renault. Can you not see that? It's a pity if you can not, as all the others tease me so about you. Do you like me?"

"Very, *very* much," I replied, conscious of that accursed color burning my face again; conscious, too, that she noted it with calm curiosity.

"Very, *very* much," she repeated, musing. "Is that why you blush so often, Mr. Renault—because you like me very, *very* much?"

Exasperated, I strove to smile. I couldn't; and dignity would not serve me, either.

"If I loved you," said I, "I might change color when you spoke. Therefore my malady must arise from other causes—say from Sir Peter's wine, for instance."

"I knew a man who fell in love with me," she said. "You may do so yet."

"Do you think it likely?" I asked, scarcely knowing how to meet this cool attack.

"I think it possible—don't you?" she asked.

I considered, or made pretense to. My heart had begun to beat too fast; and as for her, I could no more fathom her than the sea, yet her babble was shallow enough to strand wiser men than I upon its sparkling shoals.

"I do like men," she said thoughtfully, "but not all men, as I said I did. Now at supper I looked about

me and I found only you attractive, save Sir Peter, and he counts nothing in a game of hearts."

"When you come to mingle with New York society you will, no doubt, find others far more attractive," I said stupidly.

"No doubt. Still, in the interim"—she looked straight at me from under her delicate level brows—"in the meanwhile, will you not amuse me?"

"How, madam?"

"I shall not tell you if you call me 'madam.'"

"Will the Hon. Elsin Grey inform me how I may amuse her ladyship?"

"Nor that, either."

I hesitated, then leaned nearer: "How may I amuse you, Elsin?"

"Why, by courting me, silly!" she said, laughing, and spreading her silken fan. "How else is a woman amused?"

Her smooth hand lay across the velvet arm of the sofa; I took it and raised it to my lips, and she smiled approval, then drew a languid little sigh, fanned, and vowed I was the boldest man she had ever known.

I told her how exquisite her beauty was, I protested at her coldness, I dedicated myself to her service, vowing eternal constancy; and presently my elaborate expressions rang truer and grew more simple, and she withdrew her hand with a laugh, looking at me out of those beautiful eyes which now were touched with curiosity.

"For a jester, Carus, you are too earnest," she said.

"Does pretense frighten you?"

She regarded me, silent, smiling, her fan at her lips.

"You are playing with fire," she said.

"Tell me, heart of flint, am I the steel to strike a spark from?" I asked, laughing.

"I do not know yet of what metal you are made, Carus," she said thoughtfully, yet with that dim smile hovering ever upon her lips.

She dropped her fan and held up one finger. "Listen; let me read you. Here is my measure of such a man as you: First of all, generous!—look at your mouth, which God first fashions, then leaves for us to make or mar. Second, your eyes—sincere! for though you blush like a maiden, Carus, your eyes are steady to the eyes that punish. Third, dogged! spite of the fierce impatience that sets your chiseled nose a-quiver at the nostrils. There! Am I not a very gipsy for a fortune? Read me, now."

After a long silence I said, "I can not."

"Truly?"

"Truly. I can not read you, Elsin."

She opened her palm and held her fingers, one by one, frowning in an effort to be just: "First, I am a fool; second, I am a fool; third, I am a fool; fourth——"

I caught her hand, and she looked at me with a charming laugh.

"I *am*," she insisted, her hand resting in mine.

"Why?"

"Why, because I—I am in love with Walter Butler—and—and I never liked a man as well as I like you!"

I was astounded. She sighed, slowly shaking her head. "That is it, you see. Love is very different from having a good time. He is so proud, so sad, so buried

in noble melancholy, so darkly handsome, and all afire with passion—which advances him not a whit with me nor commends him to my mercy—only when he stands before me, his dark golden eyes lost in delicious melancholy; then, *then*, Carus, I know that it must be love I feel; but it is not a very cheerful sentiment." She sighed again, picking up her fan with one hand—I held the other.

"Now, with you—and I have scarce known you a dozen hours—it is so charming, so pleasant and cheerful—and I like you so much, Carus!—oh, the sentiment I entertain for you is far pleasanter than love. Have you ever been in love?"

"I am, Elsin—almost."

"Almost? Mercy on us! What will the lady say to 'almost'?"

"God knows," I said, smiling.

"Good!" she said approvingly; "leave her in God's care, and practise on me to perfect your courtship. I like it, really I do. It is strange, too," she mused, with a tender smile of reminiscence, "for I have never let Captain Butler so much as touch my hand. But discretion, you see, is love; isn't it? So if I am so indiscreet with you, what harm is there?"

"Are you unhappy away from him?" I asked.

"No, only when with him. He seems to wring my heart—I don't know why, but, oh, I do so pity him!"

"Are you—plighted?"

"Oh, dear me, yes—but secretly. Ah, I should not have told you that!—but there you are, Carus; and I do believe that I could tell you everything I know if

our acquaintance endures but twelve more hours. And *that*," she added, considering me calmly, "is rather strange, I think. Don't you?"

Ere I could reply came Sir Peter, talking loudly, protesting that it was a monstrous shame for me to steal away their guest, that I was a villain and all knew it, he himself best of all; and without more ado he tucked her arm under his and marched triumphantly away, leaving me there alone in the deserted room.

But as Elsin gained the door she turned, looking back, and, laying her hand upon her lips, threw me a kiss behind Sir Peter's shoulders.

CHAPTER III

THE COQ D'OR

The days that followed were brilliant links in a fierce sequence of gaiety; and this though the weather was so hot that the very candles in their sconces drooped, dripping their melted wax on egrette and lace, scarlet coat and scarf. A sort of midsummer madness attacked the city; we danced in the hot moonlit nights, we drove at noontide, with the sun flaring in a sky of sapphire, we boated on the Bronx, we galloped out to the lines, escorted by a troop of horse, to see the Continental outposts beyond Tarrytown—so bold they had become, and no "skinners," either, but scouts of Heath, blue dragons if our glasses lied not, well horsed, newly saddled, holsters of bearskin, musket on thigh, and the July sun a-flashing on crested helmet and crossed sling-buckles. And how my heart drummed and the red blood leaped in me to beat in neck and temple, at sight of my own comrades! And how I envied them, free to ride erect and proud in the light of day, harnessed for battle, flying no false colors for concealment—all fair and clean and aboveboard! And I a spy!

We were gay, I say, and the town had gone midsummer mad of its own fancy—a fevered, convulsive reaction from a strain too long endured; and while the

outlook for the King was no whit better here, and much worse in the South, yet, as it was not yet desperate, the garrison, the commander, and the Governor made a virtue of necessity, and, rousing from the pent inertia of the dreadful winter and shaking off the lethargy of spring, paced their cage with a restlessness that quickened to a mania for some relief in the mad distraction of folly and frivolity.

And first, Sir Peter gave a ball at our house in honor of Elsin Grey, and we danced in the state drawing-room, and in the hallway, and in the south drawing-room, and Sir Henry walked a minuet with the Hon. Elsin Grey, and I had her to wine and later in a Westchester reel. Too much punch was drunk, iced, which is a deadly thing, and worse still when the foundation is laid in oranged tea! Too many officers, too many women, and all so hot, so suffocating, that the red ran from lip and cheek, streaking the face-powder, and the bare enameled shoulders of the women were frosted with perspiration like dew on wet roses.

That was the first frolic given in her honor, followed by that wild dance at the Governor's, where the thickets of clustered candles drooped like lilies afire, and great islands of ice melted in the punch-bowls ere they had been emptied a third. And yet the summer madness continued; by day we drove in couples, in Italian chaises, or made cherry-parties to Long Island, or sailed the bay to the Narrows, or played rustic and fished in the bay; at night we danced, danced, danced, and I saw little of Elsin Grey save through a blaze of candle-light to move a minuet with her, to press her hand in

a reel, or to conduct her to some garden pavilion where servants waited with ices amid a thirsty, breathless, jostling throng.

The heat abated nothing; so terrible was it in the city that spite of the shade afforded by elm, lime, and honey-locust, men and horses were stricken on the streets, and the Tea Water ran low, and the Collect, where it flows out into a stream, dried up, and Mr. Rutger's swamps stank. Also, as was noted by men like me, who, country-bred, concern themselves with trifles, the wild birds which haunted the trees in street and lane sang no more, and I saw at times Lord Baltimore's orioles and hedge-birds, beaks open, eyes partly closed, panting from the sun, so fierce it beat upon us in New York that summertide.

As for the main Sir Peter had meant to fight with his Flatbush birds, we tried a shake-bag, stags, which, though fairly matched and handled by past masters, billed and pecked and panted without a blow from wing or spur, till we understood that the heat had stunned them, and so gave up to wait for cooler sport.

We waited, but not in idleness; the cage-fever drove us afield, and the De Lanceys had us to the house for bowls and cricket, which the ladies joined, spoiling it somewhat for my taste; and we played golf at Mr. Lispenard's, which presently lost all charm for me, as Elsin Grey remained at the pavilion and touched no club, neither wood nor iron, save to beat the devil's tattoo upon the grass and smile into the bold eyes of Captain O'Neil.

At Rivington's we found tennis, too, and good

rackets, and I played one whole morning with Elsin Grey, nor wearied of her delight that she beat me easily; though why I permitted it and why her victory gave me pleasure is more than I can comprehend, I always desiring to appear well in trials of skill at which it is a shame for gentlemen not to excel, and not ungallant to do one's best with ladies to oppose.

Every Tuesday, at Bayard's Hill near the pump, a bull was baited; but that bloody sport, and the matching of dogs, was never to my taste, although respectable gentlemen of fashion attended.

However, there was racing at many places—at Newmarket on Salisbury plain, and at Jamaica; also Mr. Lispenard had a fine course at Greenwich village, near the country house of Admiral Warren, and Mr. De Lancey another between First and Second streets, near the Bowery Lane; but mostly we drove to Mr. Rutger's to see the running horses; and I was ashamed not to bet when Elsin Grey provoked me with her bantering challenge to a wager, laying bets under my nose; but I could not risk money and remember how every penny saved meant to some prisoner aboard the *Jersey* more than a drop of water to a soul in torment.

And how it hurt me—I who love to please, and who adore in others that high disregard of expense that I dared now never disregard! And to appear poor-spirited in her eyes, too! and to see the others stare at times, and to be aware of quiet glances exchanged, and of meaning eyes!

It was late in July that the cooling change came—a delicious breath from the Narrows blowing steady as

a trade; and the change having been predicted a week since by Venus, a negro wench of Lady Coleville's, Sir Peter had wisely taken precaution to send word to Horrock in Flatbush; and now the main was to be fought at the cockpit in Great George Street, at the Frenchman's "Coq d'Or," a tavern maintained most jealously by the garrison's officers, and most exclusive though scarce decent in a moral sense, it being notorious for certain affairs in which even the formality of Gretna Green was dispensed with.

Many a daintily cloaked figure stole, masked, to the rendezvous in the garden under the cherry-trees, and many a duel was fought in the pleasant meadows to the south which we called Vauxhall; and there I have seen silent men waiting at dawn, playing with the coffee they scarce could swallow, while their seconds paced the path beyond the stile, whistling reflectively, switching the wild roses, with a watchful eye for the coming party.

But now, concerning that cocking-main at the Coq d'Or, and how it came about. The day was to be a merry one, Lady Coleville and Elsin Grey sleeping until afternoon from the dissipation of the dance at the Assembly, which lasted until the breakfast hour; Sir Peter, Captains Harkness and O'Neil, and I to see the main in the morning, lunch at the tavern, and return to rest until time to dress for the great ball and supper given by the officers of the artillery at Fort George.

The day, the 28th of July, broke cloudless and sweetly cool. Dressing, I saw the jack flying straight in the sea-wind and a schooner in the North River heeled over and scudding south, with a white necklace

of foam trailing from her sprit back along half her water-line.

Sir Peter, in riding-boots and coat, came in high spirits to drink a morning cup with me, saying his birds had arrived and Horrock had gone forward with them, and that we must bolt breakfast and mount, for the Fifty-fourth's officers were early risers, and we should not detain them. And so he chattered on, joyously, pacing my chamber while Dennis buckled my spurs.

At breakfast we bolted what was set before us, with many a glance through the windows where, in the garden drive, our horses stood saddled in the shade of an elm, a black at each bit, and the whole stable-force out, all a-grinning to wish the master luck of his Flatbush birds and the main to boot.

"Carus," said Sir Peter, fork poised, glass in hand, "it's a thousand on the main, a hundred on each battle, and I must win. You know that!"

I knew it only too well and said so, speaking cheerfully yet seriously of his affairs, which had become so complicated since the closer blockade of the city. But he was ever gaily impatient of details and of pounds and pence. Accounts he utterly refused to audit, leaving it to me to pay his debts, patch up gaps left by depreciated securities, and find a fortune to maintain him and his wife in the style which, God knows, befitted him, but which he could no longer properly afford. And when it came to providing money to fling from race-track to cockpit, and from coffee-house to card-room, I told him plainly he had none, which made him laugh and

swear and vow I was treating him most shabbily. And it was no use; he would have his pin-money, and I must sell or pledge or borrow, at an interest most villainous, from the thrifty folk in Duke Street.

So now, when I offered to discuss the danger of extravagance, he swore he would not have a day's pleasure ruined by a sermon, and presently we rose and went into the garden to mount, and I saw Sir Peter distributing silver among the servants, so that all could share the pleasure and lay wagers among their kind for the honor of the Flatbush birds and the master who bred them.

"Come, Carus," he sang out from his saddle, and I followed him at a gallop out into Broadway and up the street, keeping under the shade of the trees to save our horses, though the air was cool and we had not far to go.

Presently he drew bridle, and we walked our horses past Partition Street, past Barckley, and the common, where I glanced askance at the ominous row of the three dread buildings, the Bridewell, the Almshouse, the Prison, with the Provost's gallows standing always ready between; and it brought sullen thoughts to me which four years of patience could not crush; nor had all these years of inaction dulled the fierce spark that flashed to fire within me when I looked up at the barred windows and at the sentinels, and thought of mine own people rotting there, and of Mr. Cunningham, the Provost, whom hell should one day be the worse for.

"Is aught amiss, Carus?" asked Sir Peter, catching my eye.

"Yes, the cruelty practised yonder!" I blurted out. Never before had I said as much to any man.

"You mean the debtors—or those above in the chain-room?" he asked, surprised.

"I was not speaking of the Bridewell, but of the Prison," I said.

"What cruelty, Carus? You mean the rigor Cunningham uses?"

"Rigor!" I said, laughing, and my laugh was unpleasant.

He looked at me narrowly. We rode past Warren Street and the Upper Barracks in silence, saluting an officer here and there with preoccupied punctiliousness. Already I was repenting of my hardiness in mixing openly with politics or war—matters I had ever avoided or let pass with gay indifference.

"Carus," he said, patting his horse's mane, "you will lay a bet for the honor of the family this time—will you not?"

"I have no money," I replied, surprised; for never before had he offered to suggest an interference into my own affairs—never by word or look.

"No money!" he repeated, laughing. "Gad, you rake, what do you do with it all?" And as I continued silent, he said more gravely, "May I speak plainly to a kinsman and dear friend?"

"Always," I said uneasily.

"Then, without offense, Carus, I think that, were I you, I should bet a little—now and again—fling the guineas for a change—now and then—if I were you, Carus."

"If you were I you would not," I said, reddening to the temples.

"I think I should, nevertheless," he persisted, smi-

ling. "Carus, you know that if you need money to bet with——"

"I'll tell you what I need, Sir Peter," said I, looking him in the eye. "I need your faith in me that I am not by choice a niggard."

"God forbid!" he cried.

"Yet I pass among many for that," I said hotly. "I know it, I suffer. Yet I can not burn a penny; it belongs to others, that's all."

"A debt!" he murmured.

"Call it as you will. The money you overpay me for my poor services is not even my own to enjoy."

Sir Peter dropped his bridle and slapped his gloved hands together with a noise that made his horse jump. "I knew it," he cried, "I knew it, and so I told Elsin when she came to me, troubled, because in you this one flaw appeared; yet though she questioned me, in the same breath she vowed the marble perfect, and asked me if you had parents or kin dependent. She is a rare maid, my pretty kinswoman—" He hesitated, glancing cornerwise at me.

"Do you know Walter Butler well?" I asked carelessly.

"No, only a little. Why, Carus?"

"Is he married?"

"I never heard it. He is scarcely known to me save through Sir John Johnson, and that his zeal led him to what some call a private reprisal."

"Yes, he burned our house, or his Indians did, making pretense that they did not know who lived there, but thought the whole Bush a rebel hotbed. It

is true the house was new, built while Sir John lay brooding there in Canada over his broken parole. Perhaps Walter Butler did not know the house was ours."

"You are very generous, Carus," said Sir Peter gravely.

"No, not very. You see, my father and my mother were in France, and I here, and Butler's raiders only murdered one old man—a servant, all alone there, a man too old and deaf to understand their questions. I know who slew that ancient body-servant to my father, who often held me on his knees. No, Sir Peter, I am not generous, as you say. But there are matters which must await the precedence of great events ere their turn comes in the mills which grind so slow, so sure, and so exceeding fine."

Sir Peter looked at me in silence, and in silence we rode on until we came to the tavern called the Coq d'Or.

They were there, the early risers of the Fifty-fourth —a jolly, noisy crowd, all scarlet and gold; and they set up a cheer, which was half welcome, half defiance, when we rode into the tavern yard and dismounted, bowing right and left; and the landlord came to receive us, and servants followed with champagne-cup, iced; and there was old Horrock, too, hat in hand, to attend Sir Peter, with a shake of his wise old head and a smile on his furrowed face—Horrock, the prince of handlers, with his chicken-men, and his scales, and his Flatbush birds a-crowing defiance to the duck-wings, spangles, pyles, and Lord knows what, that his Majesty's Fifty-fourth Regiment of Foot had backed to win with every penny and farthing they could scrape to lay against us.

I heard old Horrock whisper to Sir Peter, who was reading over the match-list, "They're the best we can do, sir; combs low-cut, wings rounded, hackle and saddle trimmed to a T, and the vanes perfect." He laughed: "What more can I do, sir? They had aniseed in their bread on the third day, and on the weighing-day sheep-heart, and not two teacups of water in the seven. They came from the walks in prime condition, and tartar and jalap did the rest. They sparred free in the boots and took to the warm ale and sweet-wort, and the rooms were dark except at feeding. What more can I do, sir, except heel them to a hair's-breadth?"

"You have no peer, Horrock, and you know it," said Sir Peter, kindly, and the old man's furrowed face shone as he trotted off to the covert-room.

Meanwhile I had been hailed by a dozen friends of a dozen different regiments, good fellows all: Major Jamison of the Partisans; Ensign Halvar, young Caryl of the Fortieth Foot; Helsing of the Artillery, and apparently every available commissioned officer of the Fifty-fourth, including Colonel Eyre, a gentleman with a scientific taste for the pit that gained him the title of "The Game 'Un" from saucy subalterns, needless to say without his knowledge.

"A good bird, well handled, freely backed—what more can a gentleman ask?" said Major Neville, waddling beside Sir Peter as we filed into the tavern. "My wife calls it a shameful sport, but the cockpit is a fashionable passion, damme! and a man out o' fashion is worse than an addled cluck-egg! Eh, Renault?

Good gad, sir! Do not cocks fight unurged, and are not their battles with nature's spurs more cruel than when matched by man and heeled with steel or even silver, which mercifully ends the combat in short order? And so I tell my wife, Sir Peter, but she calls me brute," he panted plaintively.

"Pooh!" said Sir Peter, laughing, "I can always find a reason for any transgression in the list from theft to murder, and justify each crime by logic—if I put my mind to do so. But my mind is not partial to logic. I fight game-fowl and like it, be the fashion and the ethics what they may."

He was unjust to himself as usual; to him there was no difference between the death of a pheasant afield and the taking off of a good bird in the pit.

Seated around the pit, there was some delay in showing, and Dr. Carmody of the brigade staff gave me, unsolicited, his mature opinions upon game-fowl:

"Show me a bird of bold carriage, comb bright red and upright, eye full and bright, beak strong and in good socket, breast full, body broad at shoulder and tapering to tail, thigh short, round, and hard as a nail, leg stout, flat-footed, and spur low—a bird with bright, hard feathers, strong in a quill, warm and firm to the hand—and I care not what breed he be, spangle or black-red, I'll lay my last farthing with you, Mr. Renault, if it shall please you."

"And what am I to back?" said I, laughing—"a full plume, a long, soft hackle, a squirrel-tail, a long-thighed, in-kneed, weak-beaked, coarse-headed henning-fowl selected by you?"

The little doctor roared with laughter; the buzz and hum of conversation increased around us—bits of banter, jests tossed from friend to friend.

"Who dubs your birds for you, Sir Peter?" cried Helsing—"the Bridewell barber?"

"Ten guineas to eight with you on the first battle," retorted Sir Peter, courteously; and, "Done with you, sir!" said Helsing, noting the bet, while Sir Peter booked his memorandum and turned to meet a perfect shower of offers, all of which he accepted smilingly. And I—oh, I was sick to sit there without a penny laid to show my loyalty to Sir Peter. But it must be so, and I bit my lip and strove to smile and parry with a jest the well-meant offers which now and then came flying my way. But O'Neil and Harkness backed the Flatbush birds right loyally, cautioned by Sir Peter, who begged that they wait; but they would not—and one was Irish—so nothing would do but a bold front and an officer snapped with, "Done, sir!"

The judges and the referee had been chosen, the color-writers selected, and Sir Peter had won the draw, choosing, of course, to weigh first, the main being governed by rules devised by the garrison regiments, partly Virginian, partly New York custom. Matches had been made in camera, the first within the half-ounce, and allowing a stag four ounces; round heels were to be used; all cutters, twists, and slashers barred; the metal was steel, not silver.

And now the pitters had taken station, Horrock and a wall-eyed Bat-man of the Train, and the birds had billed three times and had been fairly delivered on the

score—a black brass-back of ours against a black-red of the Fifty-fourth. Scarcely a second did they eye one another when crack! slap! they were at it, wing and gaffle. Suddenly the black-red closed and held, struck like lightning five or six times, and it was all over with Sir Peter's Flatbush brass-back, done for in a single heat.

"Fast work," observed Sir Peter calmly, taking snuff, with a pleasant nod to the enemy.

Then odds on the main flew like lightning, all taken by Sir Peter and O'Neil and a few others of ours, and I biting my lip and fixing my eyes on the roof. Had I not dreaded to hurt Sir Peter I should never, never have come.

We again showed a brass-back and let him run in the pit before cutting a feather, whereupon Sir Peter rashly laid ten to five and few takers, too, for the Fifty-fourth showed a pyle of five-pounds-three—a shuffler which few fancied. But Lord! the shuffler drummed our brass-back to the tune of Sir Daniel O'Day, and though two ounces light, took just eight minutes to crow for victory.

Again we showed, this time a duck-wing, and the Fifty-fourth a blue hackle, heavily backed, who proved a wheeler, but it took twenty minutes for him to lay the duck-wing upon the carpet; and we stood three to the bad, but game, though the odds on the main were heavily against us. Our fourth, a blinker, blundered to victory; our fifth hung himself twice to the canvas and finally to the heels of a bewildered spangle; our sixth, a stag, and a wheeling lunatic at that, gave to the

Fifty-fourth a bad quarter of an hour, and then, when at the last moment our victory seemed certain, was sent flying to eternity in one last feathered whirlwind, leaving us four to split and four to go, with hopeless odds against us, and Sir Peter calmly booking side-bets on anything that anybody offered.

When the call came we all rose, leaving the pit by the side-entrance, which gave on the cherry garden, where tables were spread for luncheon and pipes fetched for all who cared not to scorch their lips with Spanish cigars.

Sir Peter, hard hit, moved about in great good humor, a seed-cake in one hand, a mug of beer in t'other; and who could suppose he stood to lose the thousand guineas he had such need of—and more besides!—so much more that it turned me cold to think of Duke Street, and how on earth I was to find funds for the bare living, luxuries aside.

As for O'Neil, the crazy, warm-hearted Irishman went about blustering for odds—pure, generous bravado!—and the Fifty-fourth, to their credit, let him go unharmed, and Harkness, too. As for me, I was very quiet, holding my peace and my opinions to myself, which was proper, as I had laid not one penny on a feather that day.

Sir Peter, seeing me sitting alone under a cherry-tree, came strolling over, followed by Horrock.

"Well, Carus," he said, smiling blandly, "more dealing with Duke Street, eh? Pooh! There's balm in Gilead and a few shillings left still in the Dock-Ward!" He laughed, but I said nothing. "Speak

out, man!" he said gaily; "what do you read by the pricking of your thumbs?"

"Ask Horrock," I said bluntly. He turned to the grim-visaged retainer, laying his hand familiarly on the old man's shoulder.

"Horrock begs me to ride for an even break," he said; "don't you, O paragon among pitters?"

"Yes, sir, I do. Ask Mr. Renault what Sir William Johnson's Huron Reds did to the Patroon's Tartars in every main fought 'twixt Johnstown and Albany in '72 and '73."

I looked up, astounded. "Have you four Hurons to show?" I asked Sir Peter, incredulously.

"I have," he said.

A desperate hope glimmered in my mind—nay, not merely a hope but a fair certainty that ruin could be held at arm's length for a while. So possessed was I by absolute faith in Sir William Johnson's strain, called Hurons, that I listened approvingly to Sir Peter's plans for a dashing recoup. After all, it was now or never; the gamblers' fever seized me, too, in a vise-like grip. Why should I not win a thousand guineas for my prisoners, risking but a few hundred on such a hazard!

"You will be there, of course," he said. And after a long silence, I answered:

"No, I shall walk in the garden until you finish. The main should be ended at five."

"As you choose, Carus," he answered pleasantly, glancing at his watch. Then turning, he cried: "Time, gentlemen—and four to ten we split the main!"

"Done with you, Sir Peter!" came the answering

shout as from a single throat; and Sir Peter, smiling to himself, booked briefly and sauntered toward the tavern door, old Horrock trotting faithfully at heel.

I had risen and was nervously pacing the grass under the cherry-trees, miserable, full of bitterness, depressed, already bitterly regretting the chance lost, arguing that it was a certainty and no hazard. Yet, deep in my heart, I knew no gentleman can bet on certainty, and where there is no certainty there is risk. That risk I had not taken; the prisoners were to gain or suffer nothing. Thinking of these matters I started to stroll through the cherry grove, and as I stepped from the shade out upon the sunny lawn the shadow of an advancing figure warned me, and I looked up to behold a young officer, in a black and green uniform, crossing my path, his head turned in my direction, his dark, luminous gaze fastened curiously upon me.

Dazzled somewhat by the sun in my eyes, I peered at him as he passed, noting the strange cut of his regimentals, the silver buttons stamped with a motto in relief, the curious sword-knot of twisted buck-thong heavily embroidered in silver and scarlet wampum. Wampum? And what was that devil's device flashing on button and shoulder-knot?

"Butler's Rangers!"

Slowly I turned to stare; he halted, looking back at me, a slim, graceful figure in forest-green, his own black hair gathered in a club, his dark amber eyes fixed on mine with that veiled yet detached glare I had not forgotten.

"Captain Butler," I said mechanically.

Hats in hand, heels together, we bowed low in the sunshine—so low that our hands on our hilts alone retained the blades in their scabbards, while our hats swept the short grass on the lawn; then, leisurely erect, once more we stood face to face, a yard of sod betwixt us, the sunshine etching our blue shadows motionless.

"Mr. Renault," he said, in that colorless voice he used at times, "I had thought to know you, but you are six years older. Time's alchemy"—he hesitated, then with a perfect bow—"refines even the noblest metal. I trust your health and fortune are all that you could desire. Is madam, your mother, well, and your honorable father?"

"I thank you, Captain Butler."

He looked at me a moment, then with a melancholy smile and a gesture wholly graceful: "It is poor reparation to say that I regret the error of my Cayugas which committed your house to the flames."

"The fortune of war, Captain Butler. I trust your home at Butlersbury still survives intact."

A dull color crept into his pallid cheeks.

"The house at Butlersbury stands," he said, "as do Johnson Hall, Guy Park, and old Fort Johnson. We hope erelong to open them again to our friends, Mr. Renault."

"I have understood so," I said politely. "When do you march from Thendara?"

Again the dark color came into his face. "Sir Frederick Haldimand is a babbler!" he said, between tightening lips. "Never a secret, never a plan, but he must bawl it aloud to all who care to listen, or sound

it as he gads about from camp to city—aye, and chatters it to the forest trees for lack of audience, I suppose. All New York is humming with it, is it not, Mr. Renault?"

"And if it is, what harm?" I said pleasantly. "Who ever heard of Thendara, save as a legend of a lost town somewhere in the wilderness? Who in New York knows where Thendara lies?"

He looked at me with unwinking eyes—the empty stare of a bird of prey.

"*You* know, for one," he said; and his eyes suddenly became piercing.

I smiled at him without comprehension, and he took the very vagueness of my smile for acquiescence.

Like the luminous shadow of summer lightning the flame flickered in his eyes, and went out, leaving them darkly drowned in melancholy. He stepped nearer.

"Let us sit under the trees for a moment—if I am not detaining you, Mr. Renault," he said in a low, pleasant voice. I bowed. We turned, walking shoulder to shoulder toward the shade of the cherry-trees, now in full foliage and heavily fruited. With perfect courtesy he halted, inclining his head, a gesture for me to pass before him. We seated ourselves at a rustic table beneath the trees; and I remember the ripe cherries which had dropped upon it from the clusters overhead, and how, as we talked, I picked them up, tasting them one by one.

"I am here," he began abruptly, "of my own idea. No one, not even Sir Henry, is aware that I am in New York. I came from Halifax by the *Gannet*, schooner,

landing at Coenties Slip among the fishing-smack in time for breakfast; then to Sir Peter Coleville's, learning he was here—cock-fighting!" A trace of a sneer edged his finely cut nostrils.

"If you desire concealment, is it wise to wear that uniform?" I asked.

"I am known on the fighting-line, not in this peaceful garrison of New York," he said haughtily. "We of the landed gentry of Tryon County make as little of New York as New York makes of us!" A deeper sneer twitched his upper lip. "Had I my way, this port should be burned from river to river, fort, shipping, dock—all, even to the farms outlying on the hills—and the enervated garrison marched out to take the field!" He made a violent gesture toward the north. "I should fling every man and gun pell-mell on that rebels' rat-nest called West Point, and uproot and tear it from the mountain flank! I should sweep the Hudson with fire; I should hurl these rotting regiments into Albany and leave it a smoking ember, and I should tread the embers into the red-wet earth! That is the way to make war! But this—" He stared south across the meadows where in the distance the sunlit city lay, windows a-glitter, spires swimming in the blue, and on the bay white sails glimmering off shores of living green.

"Mr. Renault," he said, "I am here to submit this plan to Sir Henry Clinton. Lord Cornwallis advocated the abandonment of New York last May. I am here to urge it. If Sir Henry will approve, then the war ends before the snow flies; if he will not, I still shall act my part, and lay the north in ashes so that not one ear

of corn may be garnered for the rebel army, not one grain of wheat be milled, not a truss of hay remain betwixt Johnstown and Saratoga! Nothing in the north but blackened desolation and the silence of annihilation. That is how I make war."

"That is your reputation," I said calmly.

His smile was ghastly—a laugh without sound, that touched neither eyes nor mouth.

At that moment I heard cries and laughter and a great babel of voices from the tavern. He rose instantly, I also; the stable-lads were bringing up the horses; the tavern door was flung wide, and out of it poured the cockers, a turbulent river of scarlet and gold, the noisy voices and laughter increasing to tumult as the officers mounted with jingle of spur and scabbard, draining the stirrup-cup and hastening to their duties.

"By gad, sir!" cried Jamison, turning in his saddle as he passed me, "those Hurons did the trick for Sir Peter. He's split the main, so help me! and stands to win a fortune."

And Dr. Carmody, galloping past, waved his hand with a hopeless laugh. "We're cleaned out! cleaned out!" he cried; "that main has beggared the brigade staff. Damme, he's beggared the entire garrison!"

Others rode by, gaily uproarious in defeat, clean, gallant sportsmen all, saluting misfortune as cheerily and as recklessly as they might have greeted victory.

"Have at thee, buck!" shouted young Caryl, waving his hand as he passed me. "We'll try it again, you villain, if there's life left in our fasting mess!"

And Helsing, passing at a canter, grinned and beat

his gold-laced breast in mock despair, shouting back to me: "I'm for Duke Street and Mendoza! Dine well, Carus, you who can afford to sup on chicken!"

Then came Sir Peter, cool, debonair, surrounded by a crowd afoot, Horrock at heel, his old eyes dim with joy, his grim mouth set; and after him two lads leading our horses, and O'Neil and Harkness mounted, curbing the triumph that glittered in their eyes.

"Yonder comes Sir Peter," I said to Walter Butler. "Shall I have the honor of making you known to one another?"

"He has forgotten me, I think," said Butler slowly, as Sir Peter raised his hat in triumphant greeting to me and then included Butler in a graver salute.

"You have heard the news, Carus?" he asked gaily.

"I give you joy," I said. Then, with colorless ceremony, I made them known to one another, and with greater ceremony they exchanged salutes and compliments—a pair matched in flawless breeding and the usages of perfect courtesy.

"I bear a letter," said Walter Butler, "and have this morning done myself the honor of waiting upon Lady Coleville and the 'Hon. Elsin Grey.'"

And as Sir Peter acknowledged the courtesy, I looked suddenly at Walter Butler, remembering what Elsin Grey had told me.

"The letter is from General Sir Frederick Haldimand," he said pleasantly, "and I fear it bears you news not too agreeable. The Hon. Miss Grey is summoned home, Sir Peter—pending a new campaign."

"Home!" exclaimed Sir Peter, surprised. "Why,

I thought—I had hoped we were to have her with us until winter. Gad! It is as you say, not too agreeable news, Captain Butler. Why, she has been the life of the town, sir; she has waked us and set us all a-dancing like yokels at a May-pole or a ring-around-a-rosy! Split me! Captain Butler, but Lady Coleville will be sorry to learn this news—and I, too, sir, and every man in New York town."

He looked at me in genuine distress. My face was perfectly expressionless.

"This should hit you hard, Carus," he said meaningly. Then, without seeing, I felt Walter Butler's head slowly turning, and was aware of his eyes on me.

"Come, gentlemen," said Sir Peter, "the horses are here. Is not that fine chestnut your mount, Captain Butler? You will ride with us, will you not? Where is your baggage? At Flocks? I shall send for it—no, sir, I take no excuse. While you are in New York you shall be my guest, Captain Butler."

And so, Sir Peter naming Butler to O'Neil and Harkness, and salutes being decently exchanged, we mounted and cantered off along Great George Street, Horrock on his hunter bringing up the rear.

And at every stride of my horse a new misgiving, a deeper distrust of this man Butler stirred in my troubled heart.

CHAPTER IV

SUNSET AND DARK

It was six o'clock in the early evening, the sun still shining, and in the air a sea-balm most delicious. Sir Peter and Captain Butler had gone to see Sir Henry, Butler desiring to be presented by so grand a personage as Sir Peter, I think, through mere vanity; for his own rank and title and his pressing mission should have been sufficient credentials. Sir Henry Clinton was not too difficult of approach.

Meanwhile I, finding neither Lady Coleville nor the Hon. Elsin Grey at home, had retired to my chambers to write to Colonel Willett concerning Butler's violent designs on the frontier. When I finished I made a sealed packet of all papers accumulated, and, seizing hat, snuff-box, and walking-stick, went out into Wall Street, through the dismal arcades of the City Hall, and down to Hanover Square. Opposite Mr. Goelet's Sign of the Golden Key, and next door to Mr. Minshall's fashionable Looking-Glass Store, was the Silver Box, the shop of Ennis the Tobacconist, a Boston man in our pay; and it was here that for four years I was accustomed to bring the dangerous despatches that should go north to his Excellency or to Colonel Willett, passed along from partizan to partizan and from agent to agent, though who these secret helpers along the route might be I

never knew, only that Ennis charged himself with what despatches I brought, and a week or more later they were at Dobbs Ferry, West Point, or in Albany. John Ennis was there when I entered; he bowed his dour and angular New England bow, served a customer with snuff, bowed him to the door, then returned grinning to me, rubbing his long, lean, dangerous hands upon his apron—hands to throttle a Tryon County wolf!

"Butler's in town," he said harshly, through his beak of a nose. "I guess there's blood to be smelled somewhere in the north when the dog-wolf's abroad at sunup. He came by sloop this morning," he added, taking the packet from my hands and laying it upon a table in plain sight—the best way to conceal anything.

"How do you know?" I asked.

"A Bull's-Head drover whistled it an hour since," he said carelessly. "That same drover and his mate desire to see you, Mr. Renault. Could you, by chance, take the air at dusk—say on Great George Street—until you hear a whippoorwill?"

I nodded.

"You will not fail, then, sir? This drover and his fellow go north to-night, bearing the cross o' fire."

"I shall not fail them," I said, drawing a triple roll of guineas from my pocket. "This money goes to the prison-ships; they are worse off there than under Cunningham. See to it, Ennis. I shall bring more to-morrow."

He winked; then with grimace and circumstance and many a stiff-backed bow conducted me to the door, where I stood a moment, snuff-box in hand, as though

testing some new and most delicious brand just purchased from the Silver Box.

There were many respectable folk abroad in Hanover Square, thronging the foot-paths, crowding along the gay shop-windows, officers lagging by the jeweler's show, sober gentlemen clustering about the book-stalls, ladies returning from their shopping or the hairdresser's, young bucks, arm in arm, swaggering in and out of coffee-house and tavern.

As I stood there, making pretense to take snuff, I noticed a sedan-chair standing before Mrs. Ballin's millinery-shop, and seeing that the bearers were Lady Coleville's men, I crossed the street.

As I came up they touched their hats, and at the same moment the shop-door opened and out tripped, not Lady Coleville at all, but the Hon. Elsin Grey in the freshest of flowered gowns, wearing a piquant chip hat à la Gunning, with pink ribbons tied under her dainty chin.

"You!" she cried. "Of all men, to be caught a-raking in Hanover Square like some mincing macaroni, peeping into strange sedan-chairs!"

"I knew it was Lady Coleville's chair," I said, laughing, yet a little vexed, too.

"It isn't; it's Mrs. Barry's," she said. "Our chairs are all at the varnishers. Now what excuse can you trump up?"

"The bearers are Lady Coleville's," I said. "Don't be disagreeable. I came to walk with you."

"Expecting to meet Rosamund Barry! Thank you, Carus. And I may add that I have seen little of

you since Friday; not that I had noticed your absence, but meeting you on your favorite promenade reminded me how recreant are men. Heigho! and alas! You may hand me to my chair before you leave me to go ogling Broad Street for your Sacharissa."

I conducted her to the curb in silence, tucking her perfumed skirts in as she seated herself. The bearers resumed the bars, and I, hat under one arm and stick at a fashionable angle, strolled along beside the chair as it proceeded up Wall Street. It was but a step to Broadway. I opened the chair door and aided her to descend, then dismissed the bearers and walked slowly with her toward the stoop.

"This silence is truly soothing," she observed, nose in the air, "but one can not expect everything, Mr. Renault."

"What is it that you lack?" I asked.

"A man to talk to," she said disdainfully. "For goodness sake, Carus, change that sulky face for a brighter mask and find a civil word for me. I do not aspire to a compliment, but, for mercy's sake, say something!"

"Will you walk with me a little way?" I inquired stiffly.

"Walk with you? Oh, what pleasure! Where? On Broadway? On Crown Street? On Queen Street? Or do you prefer Front Street and Old Slip? I wish to be perfectly agreeable, Carus, and I'll do anything to please you, even to running away with you in an Italian chaise!"

"I may ask you to do that, too," I said.

"Ask me, then! Mercy on the man! was there ever so willing a maid? Give me a moment to fetch a sun-mask and I'm off with you to any revel you please—short of the Coq d'Or," she added, with a daring laugh—"and I might be persuaded to that—as far as the cherry-trees—with *you*, Carus, and let my reputation go hang!"

We had walked on into Broadway and along the foot-path under the lime-trees where the robins were singing that quaint evening melody I love, and the pleasant scent of grass and salt breeze mingled in exquisite freshness.

"I had a dish of tea with some very agreeable people in Queen Street," she remarked. "Lady Coleville is there still. I took Mrs. Barry's chair to buy me a hat—and how does it become me?" she ended, tipping her head on one side for my inspection.

"It is modish," I replied indifferently.

"Certainly it is modish," she said dryly—"a Gunning hat, and cost a penny, too. Oh, Carus, when I think what that husband of mine must pay to maintain me——"

"What husband?" I said, startled.

"Why, *any* husband!" She made a vague gesture. "Did I say that I had picked him out yet, silly? But there must be one some day, I suppose."

We had strolled as far as St. Paul's and had now returned as far as Trinity. The graves along the north transept of the ruined church were green and starred with wild flowers, and we turned into the churchyard, walking very slowly side by side.

"Elsin," I began.

"Ah! the gentleman has found his tongue," she exclaimed softly. "Speak, Sir Frippon; thy Sacharissa listens."

"I have only this to ask. Dance with me once to-night, will you?—nay, twice, Elsin?"

She seated herself upon a green mound and looked up at me from under her chip hat. "I have not at all made up my mind," she said. "Captain Butler is to be there. He may claim every dance that Sir Henry does not claim."

"Have you seen him?" I asked sullenly.

"Mercy, yes! He came at noon while you and Sir Peter were gambling away your guineas at the Coq d'Or."

"He waited upon *you?*"

"He waited on Lady Coleville. I was there."

"Were you not surprised to see him in New York?"

"Not very"—she considered me with a far-away smile—"not very greatly nor very—agreeably surprised. I have told you his sentiments regarding me."

"I can not understand," I said, "what you see in him to fascinate you."

"Nor I," she replied so angrily that she startled me. "I thought to-day when I met him, Oh, dear! Now I'm to be harrowed with melancholy and passion, when I was having such an agreeable time! But, Carus, even while I pouted I felt the subtle charm of that very sadness, the strange, compelling influence of those melancholy eyes." She sighed and plucked a late violet,

drawing the stem slowly between her white teeth and staring at the ruined church.

After a while I said: "Do you regret that you are so soon to leave us?"

"Regret it?" She looked at me thoughtfully. "Carus," she said, "you are wonderfully attractive to me. I wish you had acquired that air of gentle melancholy—that poet's pallor which becomes a noble sadness—and I might love you, if you asked me."

"I'm sad enough at your going," I said lightly.

"Truly, are you sorry? And when I am gone will you forget la belle Canadienne? Ah, monsieur, l'amitié est une chose si rare, que, n'eut-elle duré qu'un jour, on doit en respecter jusqu'au souvenir."

"It is not I who shall forget to respect it, madam, jusqu'au souvenir."

"Nor I, mon ami. Had I not known that love is at best a painful pleasure I might have mistaken my happiness with you for something very like it."

"You babble of love," I blurted out, "and you know nothing of it! What foolish whim possesses you to think that fascination Walter Butler has for you is love?"

"What is it, then?" she asked, with a little shudder.

"How do I know? He has the devil's own tenacity, bold black eyes and a well-cut head, and a certain grace of limb and bearing nowise remarkable. But"—I waved my hand helplessly—"how can a sane man understand a woman's preference?—nay, Elsin, I do not even pretend to understand *you*. All I know is that our friendship began in an instant, opened to full sweet-

ness like a flower overnight, and, like a flower, is nearly ended now—nearly ended."

"Not ended; I shall remember."

"Well, and if we both remember—to what purpose?"

"To what purpose is friendship, Carus, if not to remember when alone?"

I listened, head bent. Then, pursuing my own thoughts aloud: "It is not wise for a maid to plight her troth in secret, I care not for what reasons. I know something of men; it is a thing no honest man should ask of any woman. Why do you fear to tell Sir Frederick Haldimand?"

"Captain Butler begged me not to."

"Why?" I asked sharply.

"He is poor. You must surely know what the rebels have done—how their commissioners of sequestration seized land and house from the Tryon County loyalists. Captain Butler desires me to say nothing until, through his own efforts and by his sword, he has won back his own in the north. And I consented. Meanwhile," she added airily, "he has a glove of mine to kiss, I refusing him my hand to weep upon. And so we wait for one another, and pin our faith upon his sword."

"To wait for him—to plight your troth and wait for him until he and Sir John Johnson have come into their own again?"

"Yes, Carus."

"And then you mean to wed him?"

She was silent. The color ebbed in her cheeks.

I stood looking at her through the evening light. Behind her, gilded by the level rays of the sinking sun, a new headstone stood, and on it I read:

IN MEMORY OF
Michael Cresap, First Cap't
Of the Rifle Battalions,
And Son to Col. Thomas
Cresap, Who Departed this
Life, Oct. 18, A.D. 1775.

Cresap, the generous young captain, whose dusty column of Maryland riflemen I myself had seen when but a lad, pouring through Broadalbin Bush on the way to Boston siege! This was his grave; and a Tory maid in flowered petticoat and chip hat was seated on the mound a-prattling of rebels!

"When do you leave us?" I asked grimly.

"Captain Butler has gone to see Sir Henry to ask for a packet. We sail as soon as may be."

"Does *he* go with you?" I demanded, startled.

"Why, yes—I and my two maids, and Captain Butler. Sir Frederick Haldimand knows."

"Yes, but he does not know that Captain Butler has presumed—has dared to press a clandestine suit with you!" I retorted angrily. "It does not please me that you go under such doubtful escort, Elsin."

"And pray, who are you to please, sir?" she asked in quick displeasure. "You speak of presumption in others, Mr. Renault, and, unsolicited, you offer an affront to me and to a gentleman who is not here to answer."

"I wish he were," I said between my teeth.

Her fair face hardened.

"Wishes are very safe, sir," she said in a low voice.

At that, suddenly, such a blind anger flooded me that the setting sun swam in my eyes and the blood dinned in ears and brain as though to burst them. At such moments, which are rare with me, I fall silent; and so I stood, while the strange rage shook me, and passed, leaving me cold and very quiet.

"I think we had best go," I said.

She held out her hand. I aided her to rise; and she kept my hand in hers, laying the other over it, and looked up into my eyes.

"Forgive me, Carus," she whispered. "No man can be more gallant and more sweet than you."

"Forgive me, Elsin. No maid so generous and just as you."

And that was all, for we crossed the street, and I mounted the stoop of our house with her, and bowed her in when the great door opened.

"Are you not coming in?" she asked, lingering in the doorway.

"No. I shall take the air."

"But we sup in a few moments."

"I may sup at the Coq d'Or," I said. Still she stood there, the wind blowing through the doorway fluttering the pink bows tied under her chin—a sweet, wistful face turned up to mine, and the early candle-light from the hall sconces painting one rounded cheek with golden lusters.

"Have you freely forgiven me, Carus?"

"Yes, freely. You know it."

"And you will be at the Fort? I shall give you that dance you ask to-night, shall I not?"

"If you will."

There was a silence; she stretched out one hand. Then the door was closed and I descended the steps once more, setting my hat on my head and tucking my walking-stick under one arm, prepared to meet my drover friend, who, Ennis said, desired to speak with me.

But I had no need to walk out along Great George Street to find my bird; for, as I left Wall Street and swung the corner into Broadway, the husky, impatient whisper of a whippoorwill broke out from the dusk among the ruins of Trinity, and I started and turned, crossing the street. Wild birds there were a-plenty in the city, yet the whippoorwill so seldom came into the streets that the note alone would have attracted me had Ennis not warned me of the signal.

And so I strolled once more into the churchyard and among the felled trees which the soldiers had cut down for fire-wood, as they were scorched past hope of future growth; and presently, prowling through the dusk among the graves by Lambert Street, I came upon my drover, seated upon a mound, smoking his clay as innocent as any tavern slug in the sun.

"Good even, friend," he said, looking up. "I thought I heard a whippoorwill but now, and being country bred, stole in to listen. Did you hear it, sir?"

"I thought I did," said I, amused. "I thought it sang, Pro Gloria in Excelsis——"

"Hush!" whispered the drover, smiling; "sit here

beside me and we'll listen. Perhaps the bird may sing that anthem once again."

I seated myself on the green mound, and the next moment sprang to my feet as a shape before me seemed to rise out of the very ground; then, hearing my drover laugh, I resumed my place as the short figure came toward us.

"Another drover," said my companion, "and a famous one, Mr. Renault, for he drove certain wild cattle at a headlong gallop from the pastures at Saratoga—he and I and another drover they call Dan'l Morgan. We have been strolling here among these graves, a-prying for old friends—brother drovers. We found one drover's grave—a lad called Cresap—hard by the arch there to the north."

"Did you know him?" I asked.

"Yes, lad. I was a herder of his at Dunmore's slaughter-house. I saw him jailed at Fortress Pitt; I saw him freed, too. And one fine day in '76, a-lolling at my ease in the north, what should I hear but a jolly conch-horn blowing in the forest, and out of it rolled a torrent of men in buckskin, Cresap leading, bound for that famous cattle-drive at Boston town. So I, being by chance in buckskin, and by merest chance bearing a rifle, fell in and joined the merry ranks—I and my young friend Cardigan, who is now with certain mounted drovers called, I think, Colonel Washington's Dragoons, harrying those Carolina cattle owned by Tarleton."

He glanced up at his comrade, who stood silently beside him in the darkness.

"He, too, was there, Mr. Renault—my fellow drover here, at your service. Weasel, remove thy hat and make a bow to Mr. Renault—our brother drover."

The little withered man uncovered with a grace astonishing. So perfect was his bearing and his bow that I rose instinctively to meet it, and match his courtesy with the best I could.

"When like meets like 'tis a duel of good manners," said the big drover quietly. "Mr. Renault, you salute a man as gently bred as any man who wears a gilt edge to his hat in County Tryon. I call him the Weasel with all the reverence with which I say 'your lordship.'"

The Weasel and I exchanged another bow, and I vow he outmatched me, too, in composure, dignity, and grace, and I wondered who he might be.

"Tempus," observed the giant drover, "fugits like the devil in this dawdling world o' sin, as the poet has it—eh, Weasel? So, not even taking time to ask your pardon for my Latin, sir, I catch Time by the scalp-lock and add a nick to my gun-stock. Lord, sir! That's no language for a peaceful, cattle-driving yokel, is it now? Ah, Mr. Renault, I see you suspect us, and we have only to thank God you're not a lobster-back to bawl for the sergeant and his lanthorn."

"Who are you?" I asked, smiling.

"Did you ever hear of a vile highwayman called Jack Mount?" he asked, pretending horror.

"Yes," I said.

"You wouldn't shake hands with him, would you?"

"Let's try it," I replied seriously, holding out my hand.

He took it with a chuckle, his boyish face wreathed in smiles. "A purse from a magistrate here and there," he muttered—"a Tory magistrate, overfat and proud—what harm, sir? And I never could abide fat magistrates, Mr. Renault," he confided in a whisper. "It is strange; you will scarce credit me, sir, when I tell you that when I'm near a magistrate, and particularly when he's fat, and the moon's low over the hills, why, my pistols leap from my belt of their own accord, and I must snatch them with both hands lest they go flying off like rockets and explode to do a harm to that same portly magistrate."

"He does not mean all that," said the Weasel, laying his wrinkled hand affectionately on Mount's great arm. "He has served nobly, sir, with Cresap and with Morgan."

"But when I'm alone," sighed Mount, "I'm in very bad company, and mischief follows, sure as a headache follows a tavern revel. I do not mean to stop these magistrates, Mr. Renault, only they *will* wander on the highway, under my very pistols, provoking 'em to fly out!" He looked at me and furtively licked the stem of his clay pipe.

"So you leave for the north to-night?" I asked, amused.

"Yes, sir. There's a certain Walter Butler in this town, arrived like a hen-hawk from the clouds, and peep! peep! we downy chicks must scurry to the forest, lad, or there'll be a fine show on the gallows yonder and two good rifles idle in the hills of Tryon."

"You know Walter Butler?"

"Know him? Yes, sir. I had him at my mercy once—over my rifle-sights! Ah, well—he rode away—and had it not been young Cardigan who stayed my trigger-finger— But let that pass, too. What is he here for?"

"To ask Sir Henry Clinton's sanction of a plan to burn New York and fling the army on West Point, while he and Sir John Johnson and Colonel Ross strike the grain country in the north and lay it and the frontier in ashes."

There was a silence, then a quiet laugh from Mount.

"West Point is safe, I think," he murmured.

"But Tryon?" urged the Weasel; "how will it go with Tryon County, Jack?"

Another silence.

"We'd best be getting back to Willett," said Mount quietly. "As for me, my errand is done, and the strange, fishy smells of New York town stifle me. I'm stale and timid, and I like not the shape of the gallows yonder. My health requires the half-light of the woods, Mr. Renault, and the friendly shadows which lie at hand like rat-holes in a granary. I've drunk all the ale at the Bull's-Head—weak stuff it was—and they've sent for more, but I can't wait. So we're off to the north to-night, friend, and we'll presently rinse our throats of this salt wind, which truly inspires a noble thirst, yet tells nothing to a nose made to sniff the inland breezes."

He held out his hand, saying, "So you can learn no news of this place called Thendara?"

"I may learn yet. Walter Butler said to-day that I knew it. Yet I can not recall anything save the name. Is it Delaware? And yet I know it must be Iroquois, too."

"It might be Cayuga, for all I know," he said. "I never learned their cursed jargon and never mean to. My business is to stop their forest-loping—and I do when I can." He spoke bitterly, like that certain class of forest-runners who never spare an Indian, never understand that anything but evil can come of any blood but white. With them argument is lost, so I said nothing.

"Have you anything for Colonel Willett?" he asked, after a pause.

"Tell him that I sent despatches this very day. Tell him of Butler's visit here, and of his present plans. If I can learn where this Thendara lies I will write him at once. That is all, I think."

I shook their hands, one by one.

"Have a care, sir," warned the Weasel as we parted. "This Walter Butler is a great villain, and, like all knaves, suspicious. If he once should harbor misgivings concerning you, he would never leave your trail until he had you at his mercy. We know him, Jack and I. And I say, God keep you from that man's enmity or suspicion. Good-by, Mr. Renault."

I retained his hand, gazing earnestly into his faded, kindly eyes.

"Do you know aught reflecting on his honor?" I asked.

"I know of Cherry Valley," he replied simply.

"Yes; but I mean his dealings with men in time of peace. Is he upright?"

"He is so considered, though they would have hanged him for a spy in Albany in '78–'79, had not young Lafayette taken pity on him and had him removed from jail to a private house, he pleading illness. Once uncaged, he gnawed through, and was off to the Canadas in no time, swearing to repay tenfold every moment's misery he spent in jail. He did repay—at Cherry Valley. Think, sir, what bloody ghosts must haunt his couch at night—unless he be all demon and not human at all, as some aver. Yet he has a wife, they say——"

"What!"

"He has a wife," repeated Mount—"or a mistress. It's all one to him."

"Where?" I asked quietly.

"She was at Guy Park, the Oneidas told me; and when Sullivan moved on Catharinestown she fled with all that Tory rabble, they say, to Butlersbury, and from thence to the north—God knows where! I saw her once; she is French, I think—and very young—a beauty, sir, with hair like midnight, and two black stars for eyes. I have seen an Oneida girl with such eyes." He shrugged his shoulders. "Walter Butler makes little of women—like Sir John Johnson," he added in disgust.

I was silent.

"We go north by Valentine's and North Castle, the Albany road being unhealthy traveling at night," said Mount, with a grin; "and I think, Cade, we'd best pull

foot. I trust, Mr. Renault, that you may not hear of our being taken and hung to disgrace any friends of ours. Come, Cade, old friend, our fair accomplice, the moon, is hid, so lift thy little legs and trot! Au large!"

They pulled off their hats with a gay flourish, turned, and plunged shoulder-deep into the weeds.

And so they left me, creeping away through the low foliage into Greenwich Street, while I, rousing myself, turned my steps toward home. I had no desire to sup; my appetite's edge had been turned by what I heard concerning Walter Butler. Passing slowly through the graveyard and skirting the burned church, I entered Broadway, where here and there a street-lamp was burning. Few people strolled under the lime-trees; cats prowled and courted and fought in the gutters, scattering in silent, shadowy flight before me as I crossed the street to the great house; and so buried in meditation was I that I presently found myself in my own room, and could not remember how I passed the door or mounted the long stairway to my chambers.

Dennis came to do my hair, but I drove him out with boots in a sudden, petty fury new to my nature. Indeed, lying there in my stuffed armchair, I scarcely knew myself, so strangely sad and sullen ran my thoughts—not thoughts, either, for at first I followed no definite train, but a certain irritable despondency clothed me, and trifles enraged me, leaving me bitter and sick at heart, bearing a weight of apprehension concerning nothing at all.

Oh, for a week of liberty from this pit of intrigue!

Oh, for a day's freedom to ride like those blue dragoons of Heath I had seen along the Hudson! Oh, to be free to dog-trot back to the north with those two gallant scamps of Morgan, and wear a hunting-shirt once more, and lay the long brown rifle level in this new quarrel coming soon between these Butlers and these Johnsons and our yeomanry of County Tryon!

"By God!" I muttered, "I care not if they take me, for I'm sick of spying and lying, so let them hoist me out upon that leafless tree where better men have swung, and have done with the wretched business once for all!" Which I meant not, and was silly to fume, and thankless, too, to anger the Almighty with ingratitude for His long and most miraculous protection. But I was in a foul humor with the world and myself, and I knew not what ailed me, either. True, the insolence of that libertine, Walter Butler, affronted me, and it gave me a sour pleasure to think how I should quiet his swagger with one plain word aside.

Following this lead, I fell to thinking in earnest. What would it mean—a quarrel? Dare he deny the charge? No; I should command, and he obey, and I'd send him slinking north by the same accursed schooner that brought him; and Elsin Grey should go when she pleased, escorted by a proper retinue. But I'd make no noise about it—not a word to set tongues wagging and eyes peeping—for Elsin's sake. Lord! the silly maid, to steer so near the breakers and destruction!

And what then? Well, I should never see her again, once she was safe among her kin in the Canadas. And she was doubtless the fairest woman I had ever looked

upon—but light—not in an evil sense, God wot! but prone to impulse and caprice—a kitten, soft as silk, now staring at the world out of two limpid eyes, now frisking after breeze-blown rose-leaves. A man may admire such a child, nay, learn to love her dearly, in a way most innocent. But love! She did not know its meaning, and how could she inspire it in a man of the world. No, I did not love her—could not love a maid, unripe and passionless, and overpert at times, flouting a man like me with her airs and vapors and her insolent lids and lashes. Lord! but she carried it high-handed with me at times, plaguing me, teasing, pouting when my attention wandered midway in the pretty babble with which she condescended to entertain me. And with all that—and after all is said—there was something in me that warmed to her—perhaps the shadow of kinship—perhaps because of her utter ignorance of all she prated of so wisely. Her very crudity touched the chord of chivalry which is in all men, strung tight or loose, answering to a touch or a blow, but always answering in some faint degree, I think. Yet, if this is so, how could Walter Butler find it in his heart to trouble her?

That he meant her real evil I did not credit, she being what she was. Doubtless he hoped to find some means of ridding him of a wife no longer loved; there were laws complacent for that sort of work. Yet, grant him free, how could he find it in his heart to cherish passion for a child? He was no boy—this pallid rake of thirty-five—this melancholy squire of dames who, ere he was twenty, had left a trail in Albany and

Tryon none too savory, if wide report be credited—he and Sir John Johnson!—as pretty a brace of libertines as one might find even in that rotten town of London.

Well, I would send him on his business without noise or scandal, and I'd hold a séance, too, with Mistress Elsin, wherein a curtain-lecture should be read, kindly, gravely, but with firmness fitting!

I lay back, stretching out my legs luxuriously, pleasantly contemplating the stern yet kindly rôle I was to play: first send him skulking, next enact the solemn father to this foolish maid. Then, admonishing and smiling forgiveness in one breath, retire as gravely as I entered—a highly interesting figure, magnanimous and moral——

A rapping at my chamber-door aroused me disagreeably from this flattering rhapsody.

"Enter!" I said ungraciously, and lay back, frowning to see there in the flesh the man whose punishment I had been complacently selecting.

"Mr. Renault," he said, "am I overbold in this intrusion on your privacy? Pray, sir, command me, for my business must await your pleasure."

I bowed, rising, and pointing to a chair. "It is business, then, not pleasure, as I take it, Captain Butler, that permits me to receive you?"

"The business and the pleasure both are mine, Mr. Renault," he said, which was stilted enough to be civil. "The business, sir, is this: Sir Henry Clinton received me like a gentleman, but as soon as Sir Peter had retired he listened to me as though I were demented when I

exposed my plan to burn New York and take the field. I say he used me with scant civility, and bowed me out, like the gross boor he is!"

"He is commander-in-chief, Mr. Butler."

"What do I care!" burst out Butler, his dark eyes a golden blaze. "Am I not an Ormond-Butler? Why should a Clinton affront an Ormond-Butler? By Heaven! I must swallow his airs and his stares and his shrugs because he is my superior; but I may one day rise in military rank as high as he—and I shall do so, mark me well, Mr. Renault!—and when I am near enough in the tinseled hierarchy to reach him at thirty paces I shall use the privilege, by God!"

"There are," said I blandly, "many subalterns on his staff who might serve your present purpose, Captain Butler."

"No, no," he said impatiently, his dark eyes wandering about the chamber, "I have too much at stake to call out fledglings for a sop to injured pride. No, Mr. Renault, I shall first take vengeance for a deeper wrong—and the north lies like an unreaped harvest for the sickle that Death and I shall set a-swinging there."

I bent my head, meditating; then looking up:

"You say I know where this Thendara lies?"

"Yes," he answered sullenly. "You know as well as I do *what is written* in the Book of Rites."

At first his words rang meaningless, then far in my memory a voice called faintly, and a pale ray of light grew through the darkened chambers of my brain. And now I knew, now I remembered, now I understood where that lost town must lie—the town of Thendara,

lost ever and forever, only to be forever found again as long as the dark Confederacy should endure.

Awed, I sat in silence; and he turned his gloomy eyes now on me, now on the darkened window, gnawing his lip in savage retrospection.

Instantly I was aware that he doubted me, and why. I looked up at him, astounded; he lifted his brooding head and I made a rapid sign, saying in the Mohawk tongue: "Karon-ta-Ke?—at the Tree?"

"Karon-ta-Kowa-Kon—at the great tree. Sat-Kah-tos—thou seest. There lies the lost town of Thendara. And, save for the council, where you and I have a Wolf's clan-right, no living soul could know what that word Thendara means. God help the Oneida who betrays!"

"Since when and by what nation have *you* been raised up to sit in the council of condolence?" I asked haughtily; for, strange as it may appear to those who know not what it means to wear the Oneida clan-mark of nobility, I, clean-blooded and white-skinned, was as fiercely proud of this Iroquois honor as any peer of England newly invested with the garter. And it was strange, too, for I was but a lad when chosen for the mystic rite; but never except once—the day before I left the north to serve his Excellency's purpose in New York—had I been present when that most solemn rite was held, and the long roll of dead heroes called in honor of the Great League's founder, Hiawatha.

And so, though I am pure white in blood and bone and every instinct, and having nigh forgotten that I wore the Wolf—and, too, the Long House being divided

and I siding with the Oneidas, and so at civil war with the shattered league that served King George—yet I turned on Walter Butler as a Mohawk might turn upon a Delaware, scornfully questioning his credentials, demanding his right to speak as one who had heard the roll-call of those Immortals who founded the "Great Peace" three hundred years ago.

"The Delawares named me, and the council took me," he said with perfect calmness. "The Delaware nation mourned their dead; and now I sit for the Wolf Clan—my elder brother, Renault."

"A Delaware clan is not named in the Rite," I said coldly—"nor is there kinship between us because you are adopted by the Delawares. I am aware that clanship knows no nations; and I, an Oneida Wolf, am brother to a Cayuga Wolf; but I am not brother to you."

"And why not to the twin clan of my adopted nation?" he asked angrily.

"Yours is a cleft ensign and a double clan," I sneered; "which are you, Gray Wolf or Yellow Wolf?"

"Yellow," he said, struggling to keep his temper; "and if we Delawares of the Wolf-Clan are not named in the Book of Rites, nevertheless we sit as ensigns among the noble, and on the same side of the council-lodge as your proud Oneidas. We have three in the council as well as you, Mr. Renault. If you were a Mohawk I should hold my peace, but a Delaware may answer an Oneida. And so I answer you, sir."

How strange it seems now—we two white men, gentlemen of quality, completely oblivious to blood,

birth, tradition, breeding—our primal allegiance, our very individualities sunk in the mystical freemasonry of a savage tie which bound us to the two nations we assumed to speak for, Oneida and Delaware—two nations of the great Confederacy of the Iroquois that had adopted us, investing us with that clan nobility of which we bore the ensign.

And we were in deadly earnest, too, standing proudly, fiercely, for our prerogatives; he already doubly suspicious of me because the Oneida nation which had adopted me stood for the rebel cause, yet, in his mealy-mouthed way, assuming that by virtue of Wolf clanship, as well as by that sentiment he supposed was loyalty to the King, I would do nothing to disrupt the council which I now knew must decide upon the annihilation of the Oneida nation, as well as upon the raid he contemplated.

"Do you imagine that I shall sit with head averted while four nations and your Delawares combine to plan the murder of my Oneidas?" I demanded passionately. "When the council sits at Thendara I shall send a belt to every clan in the Oneida nation, and I care not who knows it!"

He rose, pale and menacing. "Mr. Renault," he said, "do you understand that a word from you would be a treason to the King? You can be a clansman of the Wolf and at the same time be loyal to the King and to the Iroquois Confederacy; but you can not send a single string of wampum to the Oneidas and be either loyal to the Six Nations or to your King. The Oneidas are marked for punishment; the frontier is doomed—

doomed, even though this frittering commander in New York will neither aid me nor his King. A word of warning to the Oneidas is a warning to the rebels. And that, sir, I can not contemplate, and you must shrink from."

"Do you deceive yourself that I shall stand silent and see the Oneida nation ruined?" I asked between my teeth.

"Are you Oneida, or are you a British subject of King George? Are you an Iroquois renegade of the renegade Oneida nation, or are you first of all an Iroquois of the Wolf-Clan? As a white man, you are the King's subject; as an Iroquois, you are still his subject. As an Oneida only, you must be as black a rebel as George Washington himself. That is the limpid logic of the matter, Mr. Renault. A belt to the Oneidas, and you become traitor to the Confederacy and a traitor to your King. And that, I say, you can not contemplate!"

I fairly ground my teeth, subduing the rage and contempt that shook me. "Since when, Captain Butler," I sneered, "have the Oneidas learned to swallow Delaware threats? By God, sir, the oldest man among the council can not remember when a Delaware dared speak without permission of an Iroquois! As an Iroquois and an Oneida, I bid the Delawares to speak only when addressed. But as a white man, I answer you that I require no instruction concerning my conduct, and shall merely thank you for your good intentions and your kind advice, which is the more generous because unsolicited and wholly undesired!"

Again that menacing glare came into his eyes as

he stood staring at me. But I cared not; he was not my guest, and he had outraged no roof of mine that the law of hospitality must close my mouth lest I betray the salt he had eaten within my walls.

"I am thinking," he said slowly, "that we did well to burn a certain house in Tryon Bush."

"Think as you please, Captain Butler," I said, bowing. "The door swings open yonder for your convenience."

He surveyed me scornfully. "I trust," he said pleasantly, "to resume this discussion at a time more opportune."

"That also shall be at your convenience," I said. Suddenly such a loathing for the man came over me that I could scarce return his salute and maintain that courteous calm which challenged men must wear at such a moment.

He went away; and I, pacing my chamber lightly, whistled for Dennis, and when he came bade him curl and frizz and powder and perfume me as he had never done before. So to my bath, and then to court the razor, lathered cheek and chin, nose in the air, counting the posies on the wall, as I always did while Dennis shaved me of the beard I fondly feared might one day suddenly appear.

And all the while, singing in my ears, I heard the meaning phrase he used at parting. Challenged? Not quite, but threatened with a challenge. The cards were mine to play—a pretty hand, with here and there a trump. Could I meet him and serve my country best? Aye, if I killed him. And, strangely, I never thought

that he might kill me; I only weighed the chances. If I killed him he could not blab and danger me with hints of meddling or of rank disloyalty; but if I only maimed him he would never rest until suspicious eyes must make my mission useless. Suddenly I was aware that I had been a fool to anger him, if I wished to stay here in New York; nay, it was patent that unless I killed him he must one day work a mischief to our cause through me. A sneaking and unworthy happiness crept slowly over me, knowing that once my mission terminated here I was free to hoist true colors, free to bear arms, free to maintain openly the cause I had labored for so long in secret. No more mole's work a-burrowing into darkness for a scrap to stay my starving country's maw; no more slinking, listening, playing the stupid indifferent!

And all the while my conscience was at work, urging me to repair the damage my forgetful passion had wrought, urging me to heal the breach with Butler, using what skill I might command, so that I could stay here where his Excellency had set me, plying my abhorred trade in useful, unendurable obscurity.

It was a battle now 'twixt pride and conscience, 'twixt fierce desire and a loathed duty—doubly detested since I had spied a way to freedom and had half tasted a whiff of good free air, untainted by deception.

"O Lord!" I groaned within myself, "will no one set me free of this pit of intrigue and corruption in which I'm doomed to lurk? Must I, in loyalty to his Excellency, repair this fault—go patch up all with Butler, and deceive him so that his hawk's eyes and

forked tongue may not set folk a-watching this house sidewise?"

But while Dennis's irons were in my hair I thought: "Nevertheless, I must send a belt to our allies, the Oneidas; and then I dare not stay! Oh, joy!"

But the joy was soon dashed. My belt must go first to Colonel Willett, and then to his Excellency, and it might be that he would judge it best to let the Oneidas fight their own battles and so decline to send my belt.

By the time I had arrived so far in my mental argument Dennis had curled, powdered, and tied my hair in the most fashionable manner, using a black flamboyant ribbon for the clubbed queue, a pearl-gray powder à la Rochambeau; but I was not foolish enough to permit him to pass a diamond pin into my hair, for I had once seen that fashion affected by Murray, Earl of Dunmore, that Royal Governor of Virginia who had laid Norfolk in ashes out of pure vindictiveness.

My costume I shall describe, not, I hope, from any unworthy vanity, but because I love beautiful things. Therefore, for the pleasure of others who also admire, and prompted alone by a desire to gratify, I neither seek nor require excuses for recalling what I wore that night at the Artillery ball. The lace at the stock was tied full and fastened with brilliants; the coat of ivory silk, heavily embroidered with golden filigree, fell over a waistcoat of clouded ivory and gold mesh, fashionably short, and made by Thorne. My breeches were like the coat, ivory silk, buckled with gold; the stockings were white silk, a bunch of ribbon caught by the jeweled buckles at either knee; and upon my double-

channeled pumps, stitched by Bass, buckles of plain dull gold. There was blond lace at throat and cuff. I confess that, although I did not wear two watches, a great bunch of seals dangled from the fob; and the small three-cornered French hat I tucked beneath my arm was laced like a Nivernois, and dressed and cocked by the most fashionable hatter in Hanover Square.

The mirror before which I stood was but half long enough, so I bade Dennis place it upon the floor, whence it should reflect my legs and gilded court-sword. Pleased, I obtained several agreeable views of my costume, Dennis holding two mirrors for me while I pondered, hesitating where to place the single patch of black.

"Am I fine, Dennis?" I asked.

"Now God be good to the ladies, sir!" he said, so seriously that I laughed like a boy, whisked out my sword, and made a pass at my mirrored throat.

"At all events," I thought, "I'll be handsomely clothed if there's a scratch-quarrel with Walter Butler—which God avert!" Then for the first time it occurred to me that it might not be Walter Butler, but I myself, lying stretched on the lawn behind the Coq d'Or, and I was comforted to know that, however low misfortune might lay me, I should be clothed suitably and as befitted a Renault.

CHAPTER V

THE ARTILLERY BALL

When I descended from my chamber to the south drawing-room I found there a respectable company of gentlemen assembled, awaiting the ladies who had not yet appeared. First I greeted Sir Henry Clinton, who had at that moment entered, followed by his staff and by two glittering officers of his Seventh Light Dragoons. He appeared pale and worn, his eyes somewhat inflamed from overstudy by candle-light, but he spoke to me pleasantly, as did Oliver De Lancey, the Adjutant-General, who had succeeded poor young André—an agreeable and accomplished gentleman, and very smart in his brilliant uniform of scarlet loaded with stiff gold.

O'Neil, in his gay dress of the Seventeenth Dragoons, and Harkness, wearing similar regimentals, were overflushed and frolicksome, no doubt having already begun their celebration for the victory of the Flatbush birds, which they had backed so fortunately at the Coq d'Or. Sir Peter, too, was in mischievous good spirits, examining my very splendid costume as though he had not chosen it for me at his own tailor's.

"Gad, Carus!" he exclaimed, "has his Majesty appointed a viceroy in North America—or is it the

return of that Solomon whose subjects rule the Dock Ward still?"

O'Neil and Harkness, too, were merry, making pretense that my glitter set them blinking; but the grave, gray visage of Sir Henry, and his restless pacing of the polished floor, gave us all pause; and presently, as by common accord, voices around him dropped to lower tones, and we spoke together under breath, watching askance the commander-in-chief, who now stood, head on his jeweled breast, hands clasped loosely behind his back.

"Sir Peter," he said, looking up with a forced laugh, "I have irritating news. The rebel dragoons are foraging within six miles of our lines at Kingsbridge."

For a month we here in New York had become habituated to alarms. We had been warned to expect the French fleet; we had known that his Excellency was at Dobbs Ferry, with quarters at Valentine's; we had seen, day by day, the northern lines strengthened, new guns mounted on the forts and batteries, new regiments arrive, constant alarms for the militia, and the city companies under arms, marching up Murray Hill, only, like that celebrated army of a certain King of France, to march down again with great racket of drums and overfierce officers noisily shouting commands. But even I had not understood how near to us the siege had drawn, closing in steadily, inch by inch, from the green Westchester hills.

A little thrill shot through me as I noted the newer, deeper lines etched in Sir Henry's pallid face, and the

grave silence of De Lancey, as he stood by the window, arms folded, eying his superior under knitted brows.

"Why not march out, bands playing?" suggested Sir Peter gaily.

"By God, we may do that yet to the tune they choose for us!" blurted out Sir Henry.

"I meant an assault," said Sir Peter, the smile fading from his handsome face.

"I know what you meant," returned Sir Henry wearily. "But that is what they wish. I haven't the men, gentlemen."

There was a silence. He stood there, swaying slowly to and fro on his polished heels, buried in reflection; but I, who stood a little to one side, could see his fingers clasped loosely behind his back, nervously working and picking at one another.

"What do they expect?" he said suddenly, lifting his head but looking at no one—"what do they expect of me in England? I have not twelve thousand effectives, and of these not nine thousand fit for duty. *They* have eleven thousand, counting the French, not a dozen miles north of us. Suppose I attack? Suppose I beat them? They have but a mile to fall back, and they are stronger posted than before. I can not pass the Harlem with any chance of remaining, unless I leave here in New York a garrison of at least six thousand regulars. This gives me but three thousand regulars for a sortie." He moved his head slowly, his eyes traveled from one to another with that heavy, dazed expression which saw nothing.

"Thirty thousand men could not now force Ford-

ham Heights—and but a single bridge left across the Harlem. To boat it means to be beaten in detail. I tell you, gentlemen, that the only chance I might have in an attempt upon any part of Washington's army must be if he advances. In formal council, Generals Kniphausen, Birch, and Robertson sustain me; and, believing I am right, I am prepared to suffer injustice and calumny in silence from my detractors here in New York and at home."

His heavy eyes hardened; a flash lighted them, and he turned to Sir Peter, adding:

"I have listened to a very strange proposition from the gentleman you presented to me, Sir Peter. His ideas of civilized warfare and mine do not run in like channels."

"So I should imagine," replied Sir Peter dryly. "But he is my guest, and at his pressing solicitation I went with him to wait upon you."

Sir Henry smiled, for Sir Peter had spoken very distinctly, though without heat.

"My dear friend," said the general gently, "are you to blame for the violent views of this gentleman who so—ah—*distinguished* himself at Cherry Valley?"

A sour grimace stamped the visage of every officer present; the name of Cherry Valley was not pleasant to New York ears.

At that moment Walter Butler entered, halted on the threshold, glancing haughtily around him, advanced amid absolute silence, made his bow to Sir Peter, turned and rendered a perfect salute to Sir Henry, then, as Sir Peter quietly named him to every man present,

greeted each with ceremony and a graceful reserve that could not but stamp him as a gentleman of quality and breeding.

To me, above all, was his attitude faultless; and I, relinquishing to a tyrant conscience all hopes of profiting by my blunder in angering him, and giving up all hopes of a duel and consequently of freedom from my hateful business in New York, swallowed pride and repulsion at a single gulp, and crossed the room to where he stood alone, quite at his ease amid the conversation which excluded him.

"Mr. Butler," I said, "I spoke hastily and thoughtlessly an hour since. I come to say so."

He bowed instantly, regarding me with curious eyes.

"I know not how to make further amends," I began, but he waved his hand with peculiar grace, a melancholy smile on his pale visage.

"I only trust, Mr. Renault, that you may one day understand me better. No amends are necessary. I assure you that I shall endeavor to so conduct that in future neither you nor any man may misapprehend my motives." He glanced coolly across at Sir Henry, then very pleasantly spoke of the coming rout at the Fort, expressing pleasure in gaiety and dancing.

"I love music, too," he said thoughtfully, "but have heard little for a year save the bellow of conch-horns from the rebel riflemen of Morgan's corps."

Mr. De Lancey had come up, moved by the inbred courtesy which distinguished not Sir Henry, who osten-

tatiously held Sir Peter in forced consultation, his shoulder turned to Walter Butler. And, of the twain, Mr. Butler cut the better figure, and spite of his true character, I was secretly gratified to see how our Tryon County gentry suffered nothing in comparison of savoir faire with the best that England sent us. Courtesy to an enemy—that is a creed no gentleman can renounce save with his title. I speak not of disputes in hot blood, but of a chance meeting upon neutral ground; and Sir Henry was no credit to his title and his country in his treatment there of Walter Butler.

One by one all spoke to Mr. Butler; laughter among us broke out as wine was served and compliments exchanged.

"The hardest lesson man is born to is that lesson which teaches him to await the dressing of his lady," said De Lancey.

"Aye, and await it, too, without impatience!" said Captain Harkness.

"And in perfect good-humor," echoed De Lancey gravely. O'Neil sat down at the piano and played "The World Turned Upside-Down," all drifting into the singing, voice after voice; and the beauty of Walter Butler's voice struck all, so that presently, one by one, we fell silent, and he alone carried the quaint old melody to its end.

"I have a guitar hereabouts," blurted out Sir Peter, motioning a servant.

The instrument was brought, and Walter Butler received it without false modesty or wearying protestation, and, touching it dreamily, he sang:

"Ninon! Ninon! Que fais-tu de la vie?
L'heure s'enfuit, le jour succède au jour,
Rose, ce soir—demain flétrie
Comment vis-tu, toi qui n'as pas d'amour?

. . . . . .

Ouvrez-vous, jeunes fleurs
Si la mort vous enlève,
La vie est un sommeil, l'amour en est le rêve!"

Sad and sweet the song faded, lingering like perfume, as the deep concord of the strings died out. All were moved. We pressed him to sing more, and he sang what we desired in perfect taste and with a simplicity that fascinated all.

I, too, stood motionless under the spell, yet struggling to think of what I had heard of the nearness of his Excellency to New York, and how I might get word to him at once concerning the Oneidas' danger and the proposed attempt upon the frontier granaries. The ladies had as yet given no sign of readiness; all present, even Sir Henry, stood within a circle around Walter Butler. So I stepped quietly into the hallway and hastened up the stairs to my chamber, which I locked first, then seized paper and quill and fell to scribbling:

"To His Excellency, Gen'l Washington:

"*Sir*—I regret to report that, through thoughtlessness and inadvertence, I have made a personal enemy of Captain Walter Butler of the Rangers, who is now here on a mission to enlist the aid of Sir Henry Clinton in a new attempt on the frontier. His purpose in this enterprise is to ruin our granaries, punish the Oneidas

friendly to us, and, if aided from below, seize Albany, or at least Johnstown, Caughnawaga, and Schenectady. Sir John Johnson, Major Ross, and Captain Butler are preparing to gather at Niagara Fort. They expect to place a strong, swift force in the field—Rangers, Greens, Hessians, Regulars, and partizans, not counting Brant's Iroquois of the Seneca, Cayuga, and Mohawk nations.

"The trysting-place is named as Thendara. Only an Iroquois, adopted or native, can understand how Thendara is to be found. It is a town that has no existence—a fabled town that has existed and will exist again, but does not now exist. It is a mystic term used in council, and understood only by those clan ensigns present at the Rite of Condolence. At a federal council of the Five Nations, at a certain instant in the ceremonies, that spot which for a week shall be chosen to represent the legendary and lost town of Thendara, is designated to the clan attestants.

"Now, sir, as our allies the Oneidas dare not answer to a belt summons for federal council, there is no one who can discover for you the location of the trysting-spot, Thendara. I, however, am an Oneida councilor, having conformed to the law of descent by adoption; and having been raised up to ensign by the Wolf-Clan of the Oneida Nation, beg leave to place my poor services at your Excellency's disposal. There may be a chance that I return alive; and you, sir, are to judge whether any attempt of mine to answer the Iroquois belt, which surely I shall receive, is worth your honorable consideration. In the meanwhile I am send-

ing copies of this letter to Colonel Willett and to Gen'l Schuyler."

I hastily signed, seized more writing-paper, and fell to copying furiously. And at length it was accomplished, and I wrapped up the letters in a box of snuff, tied and sealed the packet, and called Dennis.

"Take this snuff back to Ennis, in Hanover Square," I said peevishly, "and inform him that Mr. Renault desires a better quality."

My servant took the box and hastened away. I stood an instant, listening. Walter Butler was still singing. I cast my eyes about, picked up a half-written sheet I had discarded for fault of blots, crumpled it, and reached for a candle to burn it. But at that instant I heard the voices of the ladies on the landing below, so quickly opening my wainscot niche I thrust the dangerous paper within, closed the panel, and hastened away down-stairs to avoid comment for my absence.

In the merry company now assembled below I could scarcely have been missed, I think, for the Italian chaises had but just that moment appeared to bear us away to the Fort, and the gentlemen were clustered about Lady Coleville, who, encircled by a laughing bevy of pretty women, was designating chaise-partners, reading from a list she held in her jeweled hands. Those already allotted to one another had moved apart, standing two and two, and as I entered the room I saw Walter Butler give his arm to Rosamund Barry at Lady Coleville's command, a fixed smile hiding his disappointment, which turned to a white grimace as Lady Cole-

ville ended with: "Carus, I entrust to your escort the Hon. Elsin Grey, and if you dare to run off with her there are some twenty court-swords ready here to ask the reason why. Sir Henry, will you take me as your penance?"

"Now, gentlemen," cried Sir Peter gaily, "the chaises are here; and please to remember that there is no Kissing-Bridge between Wall Street and the Battery."

Elsin Grey turned to me, laying her soft white hand on mine.

"Did you hear Mr. Butler sing?" she whispered. "Is it not divine enough to steal one's heart away?"

"He sings well," I said, gazing in wonder at her ball-gown—pale turquoise silk, with a stomacher of solid brilliants and petticoat of blue and silver. "Elsin, I think I never saw so beautiful a maid in all my life, nor a beautiful gown so nobly borne."

"Do you really think so?" she asked, delighted at my bluntness. "And you, too, Carus—why, you are like a radiant one from the sky! I have ever thought you handsome, but not as flawless as you now reveal yourself. Lord! we should cut a swathe to-night, you and I, sir, blinding all eyes in our proper glitter. I could dance all night, and all day too! I never felt so light, so gay, so eager, so reckless. I'm quivering with delight, Carus, from throat to knee; and, for the rest, my head is humming with the devil's tattoo and my feet keeping time."

She raised the hem of her petticoat a hand's breadth,

and tapped the floor with one little foot—a trifle only. "That ballet figure that we did at Sir Henry's—do you remember?—and the heat of the ballroom, and the French red running from the women's cheeks? To-night is perfect, cool and fragrant. I shall dance until I die, and go up to heaven in one high, maddened whirl—zip!—like a burning soul!"

We were descending the stoop now. Our chaise stood ready. I placed her and followed, and away we rolled down Broadway.

"Am I to have two dances?" I asked.

"Two? Why, you blessed man, you may have twenty!"

She turned to me, eyes sparkling, fan half spread, a picture of exquisite youth and beauty. Her jewels flashed in the chaise-lamps, her neck and shoulders glowed clear and softly fair.

"Is that French red on lip and cheek?" I asked, to tease her.

"If there were a certain sort of bridge betwixt Wall Street and the Fort you might find out without asking," she said, looking me daringly in the eyes. "Lacking that same bridge, you have another bridge and another problem, Mr. Renault."

"For lack of a Kissing-Bridge I must solve the *pons asinorum*, I see," said I, imprisoning her hands. There was a delicate hint of a struggle, a little cry, and I had kissed her. Breathless she looked at me; the smile grew fixed on her red lips.

"Your experience in such trifles is a blessing to the untaught," she said. "You have not crumpled a rib-

bon. Truly, Carus, only long and intense devotion to the art could turn you out a perfect master."

"My compliments to you, Elsin; I take no credit that your gown is smooth and the lace unruffled."

"Thank you; but if you mean that I, too, am practised in the art, you are wrong."

The fixed smile trembled a little, but her eyes were wide and bright.

"Would you laugh, Carus, if I said it: what you did to me—is the first—the very first in all my life?"

"Oh, no," I said gravely, "I should not laugh if you commanded otherwise."

She looked at me in silence, the light from the chaise-lamps playing over her flushed face. Presently she turned and surveyed the darkness where, row on row, ruins of burned houses stood, the stars shining down through roofless walls.

Into my head came ringing the song that Walter Butler sang:

"Ninon! Ninon! thy sweet life flies!
Wasted in hours day follows day.
The rose to-night to-morrow dies:
Wilt thou disdain to love alway?
How canst thou live unconscious of Love's fire,
Immune to passion, guiltless of desire?"

Now all around us lamplight glimmered as we entered Bowling Green, where coach and chaise and sedan-chair were jumbled in a confusion increased by the crack of whips, the trample of impatient horses, and the cries of grooms and chairmen. In the lamp's

increasing glare I made out a double line of soldiers, through which those invited to the Fort were passing; and as our chaise stopped and I aided Elsin to descend, the fresh sea-wind from the Battery struck us full, blowing her lace scarf across my face.

Through lines of servants and soldiers we passed, her hand nestling closely to my arm, past the new series of outworks and barricades, where bronze field-pieces stood shining in the moonlight, then over a dry moat by a flimsy bridge, and entered the sally-port, thronged with officers, all laughing and chatting, alert to watch the guests arriving, and a little bold, too, with their stares and their quizzing-glasses. There is, at times, something almost German in the British lack of delicacy, which is, so far, rare with us here, though I doubt not the French will taint a few among us. But insolence in stare and smirk is not among our listed sins, though, doubtless, otherwise the list is full as long as that of any nation, and longer, too, for all I know.

Conducting Elsin Grey, I grew impatient at the staring, and made way for her without ceremony, which caused a mutter here and there.

In the great loft-room of the Barracks, held by the naval companies, the ball was to be given. I relinquished my pretty charge to Lady Coleville at the door of the retiring-room, and strolled off to join Sir Peter and the others, gathering in knots throughout the cloak-room, where two sailors, cutlasses bared, stood guard.

"Well, Carus," he said, smilingly approaching me, "did you heed those chaste instructions I gave concerning the phantom Kissing-Bridge?"

"I did not run away with her," I said, looking about me. "Where is Walter Butler?"

"He returned to the house in a chaise for something forgotten—or so he said. I did not understand him clearly, and he was in great haste."

"He went back to *our* house?" I asked uneasily.

"Yes—a matter of a moment, so he said. He returns to move the opening dance with Rosamund."

Curiously apprehensive, I stood there listening to the chatter around me. Sir Peter drummed with his fingers on his sword-hilt, and nodded joyously to every passer-by.

"You have found Walter Butler more agreeable, I trust, than our friend Sir Henry found him," he said, turning his amused eyes on me.

"Perhaps," I said.

"Perhaps? Damme, Carus, that is none too cordial! What is it in the man that keeps men aloof? Eh? He's a gentleman, a graceful, dark, romantic fellow, in his forest-green regimentals and his black hair worn unpowdered. And did you ever hear such a voice?"

"No, I never did," I replied sulkily.

"Delicious," said Sir Peter—"a voice prettily cultivated, and sweet enough to lull suspicion in a saint." He laughed: "Rosamund made great eyes at him, the vixen, but I fancy he's too cold to catch fire from a coquette. Did you learn if he is married?"

"Not from him, sir."

"From whom?"

I was silent.

"From whom?" he asked curiously.

"Why, I had it from one or two acquaintances, who say they knew his wife when she fled with other refugees from Guy Park," I answered.

Sir Peter shrugged his handsome shoulders, dusted his nose with a whisk of his lace handkerchief, and looked impatiently for a sign of his wife and the party of ladies attending her.

"Carus," he said under his breath, "you should enter the lists, you rogue."

"What lists?" I answered carelessly.

"Lord! he asks me what lists!" mimicked Sir Peter. "Why don't you court her? The match is suitable and desirable. You ninny, do you suppose it was by accident that Elsin Grey became our guest? Why, lad, we're set on it—and, damme! but I'm as crafty a match-maker as my wife, planning the pretty game together in the secret of our chambers after you and Elsin are long abed, and—Lord! I came close to saying 'snoring'—for which you should have called me out, sir, if you are champion of Elsin Grey."

"But, Sir Peter," I said smiling, "I do not love the lady."

"A boorish speech!" he snapped. "Take shame, Carus, you Tryon County bumpkin!"

"I mean," said I, reddening, "and should have said, that the lady does not love me."

"That's better." He laughed, and added, "Pay your court, sir. You are fashioned for it."

"But I do not care to," I said.

"O Lord!" muttered Sir Peter, looking at the great beams above us, "my match-making is come to naught, after all, and my wife will be furious with you—furious, I say. And here she comes, too," he said, brightening, as he ever did, at sight of his lovely wife, who had remained his sweetheart, too; and this I am free to say, that, spite of the looseness of the times and of society, never, as long as I knew him, did Sir Peter forget in thought or deed those vows he took when wedded. Sportsman he was, and rake and gambler, as were we all; and I have seen him often overflushed with wine, but never heard from his lips a blasphemy or foul jest, never a word unworthy of clean lips and the clean heart he carried with him to his grave.

As Lady Coleville emerged from the ladies' cloak-room, attended by her pretty bevy, Sir Peter, followed by his guests, awaited her in the great corridor, where she took his arm, looking up into his handsome face with that indefinable smile I knew so well—a smile of delicate pride, partly tender, partly humorous, tinctured with faintest coquetry.

"Sweetheart," he said, "that villain, Carus, will have none of our match-making, and I hope Rosamund twists him into a triple lover's-knot, to teach him lessons he might learn more innocently."

Lady Coleville flushed up and looked around at me. "Why, Carus," she said softly, "I thought you a man of sense and discretion."

"But I—but she does not favor me, madam," I protested in a low voice.

"It is your fault, then, and your misfortune," she

said. "Do you not know that she leaves us to-morrow? Sir Henry has placed a packet at our service. Can you not be persuaded—for my sake? It is our fond wish, Carus. How can a man be insensible to such wholesome loveliness as hers?"

"But—but she is a child—she has no heart! She is but a child yet—all caprice, innocence, and artless babble—and she loves not me, madam——"

"*You* love not *her!* Shame, sir! Open those brown blind eyes of yours, that look so wise and are so shallow if such sweetness as hers troubles not their depths! Oh, Carus, Carus, you make me too unhappy!"

"Idiot!" added Sir Peter, pinching my arm. "Bring her to us, now, for we enter. She is yonder, you slow-wit! nose to nose with O'Neil. Hasten!"

But Elsin's patch-box had been mislaid, and while we searched for it I saw the marines march up, form in double rank, and heard the clear voice of their sergeant announcing:

"Sir Peter and Lady Coleville!

"Captain Tully O'Neil and the Misses O'Neil!

"Adjutant-General De Lancey and Miss Beekman!

"Sir Henry Clinton!

"Captains Harkness, Rutherford, Hallowell, and McIvor!

"Major-General——"

"Elsin," I said, "you should have been announced with Sir Peter and Lady Coleville!"

She had found her patch-box and her fan at length, and we marched in, the sergeant's loud announcement ringing through the quickly filling room:

"Mr. Carus Renault and the Honorable Elsin Grey!"

"What *will* folk say to hear our banns shouted aloud in the teeth of all New York?" she whispered mischievously. "Mercy on me! if you turn as red as a Bushwick pippin they will declare we are affianced!"

"I shall confirm it if you consent!" I said, furious to burn at a jest from her under a thousand eyes.

"Ask me again," she murmured; "we make our reverences here."

She took her silk and silver petticoat between thumb and forefinger of each hand and slowly sank, making the lowest, stateliest curtsy that I ever bowed beside; and I heard a low, running murmur sweep the bright, jeweled ranks around us as we recovered and passed on, ceding our place to others next behind.

The artillerymen had made the great loft gay with bunting. Jacks and signal-flags hung from the high beams overhead, clothing the bare timbers with thickets of gayest foliage; banners and bright scarfs, caught up with trophies, hung festooned along the unpainted walls. They had made a balcony with stairs where the band was perched, the music of the artillery augmented by strings—a harp, half a dozen fiddles, cellos, bassoons, and hautboys, and there were flutes, too, and trumpets lent by the cavalry, and sufficient drums to make that fine, deep, thunderous undertone, which I love to hear, and which heats my cheeks with pleasure.

Beyond the spar-loft the sail-loft had been set aside and fashioned most elegantly for refreshment. An

immense table crossed it, behind which servants stood, and behind the servants the wall had been lined with shelves covered with cakes, oranges, apples, early peaches, melons and nectarines, and late strawberries, also wines of every sort, pastry, jellies, whip-syllabub, rocky and floating island, blanc-mange, brandied preserves—and Heaven knows what! But Elsin Grey whispered me that Pryor the confectioner had orders for coriander and cinnamon comfits by the bushel, and orange, lemon, chocolate, and burned almonds by the peck.

"Do look at Lady Coleville," whispered Elsin, gently touching my sleeve; "is she not sweet as a bride with Sir Peter? And oh, that gown! with the lilac ribbons and flounce of five rows of lace. Carus, she has forty diamond buttons upon her petticoat, and her stomacher is all amethysts!"

"I wonder where Walter Butler is?" I said restlessly.

"Do you wish to be rid of me?" she asked.

"God forbid! I only marvel that he is not here—he seemed so eager for the frolic——"

My voice was drowned in the roll of martial music; we took the places assigned us, and the slow march began, ending in the Governor's set, which was danced by eight couples—a curious dance, newly fashionable, and called "En Ballet." This we danced in a very interesting fashion, sometimes two and two, sometimes three and two, or four couple and four couple, and then all together, which vastly entertained the spectators. In the final mêlée I had lost my lady to Mr. De Lancey,

who now carried her off, leaving me with a willowy maid, whose partner came to claim her soon.

The ball now being opened, I moved a minuet with Lady Coleville, she adjuring me at every step and turn to let no precious moment slip to court Elsin; and I, bland but troubled, and astonished to learn how deep an interest she took in my undoing—I with worry enough before me, not inclusive of a courtship that I found superfluous and unimportant.

When she was rid of me, making no concealment of her disappointment and impatience, I looked for Elsin, but found Rosamund Barry, and led her out in one of those animated figures we had learned at home from the Frenchman, Grasset—dances that suited her, the rose coquette!—gay dances, where the petticoat reveals a pretty limb discreetly; where fans play, opening and closing like the painted wings of butterflies alarmed; where fingers touch, fall away, interlace and unlace; where a light waist-clasp and a vis-à-vis leaves a moment for a whisper and its answer, promise, assent, or low refusal as partners part, dropping away in low, slow reverence, which ends the frivolous figure with regretful decorum.

Askance I had seen Elsin and O'Neil, a graceful pair of figures in the frolic, and now I sought her, leaving Rosamund to Sir Henry, but that villain O'Neil had her to wine, and amid all that thirsty throng and noise of laughter I missed her in the tumult, and then lost her for two hours. I must admit those two hours sped with the gay partners that fortune sent me—and one there was whose fingers were shyly eloquent, a black-

eyed beauty from Westchester, with a fresh savor of free winds and grassy hillsides clinging to her, and a certain lovely awkwardness which claims an arm to steady very often. Lord! I had her twice to ices and to wine, and we laughed and laughed at nothing, and might have been merrier, but her mother seized her with scant ceremony, and a strange young gentleman breathed hard and glared at me as I recovered dignity, which made me mad enough to follow him half across the hall ere I reflected that my business here permitted me no quarrel of my own seeking.

Robbed of my Westchester shepherdess, swallowing my disgust, I sauntered forward, finding Elsin Grey with Lady Coleville, seated together by the wall. What they had been whispering there together I knew not, but I pushed through the attendant circle of beaus and gallants who were waiting there their turns, and presented myself before them.

"I am danced to rags and ribbons, Carus," said Elsin Grey—"and no thanks to you for the pleasure, you who begged me for a dance or two; and I offered twenty, silly that I was to so invite affront!"

She was smiling when she spoke, but Lady Coleville's white teeth were in her fan's edge, and she looked at me with eyes made bright through disappointment.

"You are conducting like a silly boy," she said, "with those hoydens from Westchester, and every little baggage that dimples at your stare. Lord! Carus, I thought you grown to manhood!"

"Is there a harm in dancing at a ball, madam?" I asked, laughing.

"Fie! You are deceitful, too. Elsin, be chary of your favors. Dance with any man but him. He'll be wearing two watches to-morrow, and his hair piled up like a floating island!"

She smiled, but her eyes were not overgay. And presently she turned on Elsin with a grave shake of her head:

"You disappoint me, both of you," she said. "Elsin, I never dreamed that *you*——"

Their fans flew up, their heads dipped, then Elsin rose and asked indulgence, taking my arm, one hand lying in Lady Coleville's hand.

"Do you and Sir Peter talk over it together," she said, with a lingering wistfulness in her voice. "I shall dance with Carus, whether he will or no, and then we'll walk and talk. You may tell Sir Peter, if you so desire."

"*All?*" asked Lady Coleville, retaining Elsin's hand.

"All, madam, for it concerns all."

Sir Henry Clinton came to wait on Lady Coleville, and so we left them, slowly moving out through the brilliant sea of silks and laces, her arm resting close in mine, her fair head bent in silent meditation.

Around us swelled the incessant tumult of the ball, music and the blended harmony of many voices, rustle and whisper of skirt and silk, and the swish! swish! of feet across the vast waxed floor.

"Shall we dance?" I asked pleasantly.

She looked up, then out across the ocean of glitter and restless color.

"Now I am in two minds," she said—"to dance until there's no breath left and but a wisp of rags to cover me, or to sip a syllabub with you and rest, or go gaze at the heavens the while you court me——"

"That's three minds already," I said, laughing.

"Well, sir, which are you for?"

"And you, Elsin?"

"No, sir, you shall choose."

"Then, if it lies with me, I choose the stars and courtship," I said politely.

"I wonder," she said, "why you choose it—with a maid so pliable. Is not half the sport in the odds against you—the pretty combat for supremacy, the resisting fingers, and the defense, face covered? Is not the sport to overcome all these, nor halt short of the reluctant lips, still fluttering in voiceless protest?"

"Where did you hear all that?" I asked, piqued yet laughing.

"Rosamund Barry read me my first lesson—and, after all, though warned, I let you have your way with me there in the chaise. Oh, I am an apt pupil, Carus, with Captain Butler in full control of my mind and you of my body."

"Have you seen him yet?" I asked.

"No; he has not appeared to claim his dance. A gallant pair of courtiers I have found in you and him——"

"Couple our names no more!" I said so hotly that she stopped, looking at me in astonishment.

"Have you quarreled?" she asked.

I did not answer. We had descended the barrack-

stairs and were entering the parade. Dark figures in pairs moved vaguely in the light of the battle-lanthorns set. We met O'Neil and Rosamund, who stood star-gazing on the grass, and later Sir Henry, pacing the sod alone, who, when he saw me, motioned me to stop, and drew a paper from his breast.

"Sir Peter and Lady Coleville's pass for Westchester, which he desired and I forgot. Will you be good enough to hand it to him, Mr. Renault? There is a council called to-night—it is close to two o'clock, and I must go."

He took a courtly leave of us, then wandered away, head bent, pacing the parade as though he kept account of each slow step.

"Yonder comes Knyphausen, too, and Birch," I said, as the German General emerged from the casemates, followed by Birch and a raft of officers, spurs clanking.

We stood watching the Hessians as they passed in the lamp's rays, officers smooth-shaven and powdered, wearing blue and yellow, and their long boots; soldiers with black queues in eelskin, tiny mustaches turned up at the waxed ends, and long black, buttoned spatterdashes strapped at instep and thigh.

"Let us ascend to the parapets," she said, looking up at the huge, dark silhouette above where the southeast bastion jutted seaward.

A sentry brought his piece to support as we went by him, ascending the inclined artillery road, whence we presently came out upon the ramparts, with the vast sweep of star-set firmament above, and below us the

city's twinkling lights on one side, and upon the other two great rivers at their trysting with the midnight ocean.

There were no lights at sea, none on the Hudson, and on the East River only the sad signal-spark smoldering above the *Jersey*.

Elsin had found a seat low on a gun-carriage, and, moving a little, made place for me.

"Look at that darkness," she said—"that infinite void under which an ocean wallows. It is like hell, I think. Do you understand how I fear the ocean?"

"Do you fear it, child?"

"Aye," she said, musing; "it took father and mother and brother. You knew that?"

"Lady Coleville says there is always hope that they may be alive—cast on that far continent——"

"So the attorneys say—because there is a legal limit—and I am the Honorable Elsin Grey. Ah, Carus, *I* know that the sea has them fast. No port shall that tall ship enter save the last of all—the Port of Missing Ships. Heigho! Sir Frederick is kind—in his own fashion. . . . I would I had a mother. . . . There is a loneliness that I feel . . . at times. . . ."

A vague gesture, and she lifted her head, with a tremor of her shoulders, as though shaking off care as a young girl drops a scarf of lace to her waist.

Presently she turned quietly to me:

"I have told Lady Coleville," she said.

"Told her what, child?"

"Of my promise to Captain Butler. I have not yet told everything—even to you."

Roused from my calm sympathy I swung around, alert, tingling with interest and curiosity.

"I gave her leave to inform Sir Peter," she added. "They were too unhappy about you and me, Carus. Now they will understand there is no chance."

And when Sir Peter had asked me if Walter Butler was married, I had admitted it. Here was the matter already at a head, or close to it. Sudden uneasiness came upon me, as I began to understand how closely the affront touched Sir Peter. What would he do?

"What is it called, and by what name, Carus, when a man whose touch one can not suffer so dominates one's thoughts—as he does mine?"

"It is not love," I said gloomily.

"He swears it is. Do you believe there may lie something compelling in his eyes that charm and sadden—almost terrify, holding one pitiful yet reluctant?"

"I do not know. I do not understand the logic of women's minds, nor how they reason, nor why they love. I have seen delicacy mate with coarseness, wit with stupidity, humanity with brutality, religion with the skeptic, aye, goodness with evil. I, too, ask why? The answer ever is the same—because of love!"

"Because of it, is reason; is it not?"

"So women say."

"And men?"

"Aye, they say the same; but with men it is another sentiment, I think, though love is what we call it."

"Why do men love, Carus?"

"Why?" I laughed. "Men love—men love be-

cause they find it pleasant, I suppose—for variety, for family reasons."

"For nothing else?"

"For a balm to that mad passion driving them."

"And—nothing nobler?"

"There is a noble love, part chivalry, part desire, inspired by mind and body in sweetest unison."

"A mind that seeks its fellow?" she asked softly.

"No, a mind that seeks its complement, as the body seeks. This union, I think, is really love. But I speak with no experience, Elsin. This only I know, that you are too young, too innocent to comprehend, and that the sentiment awakened in you by what you think is love, is not love. Child, forgive me what I say, but it rings false as the vows of that young man who importunes you."

"Is it worthy of you, Carus, to stab him so behind his back?"

I leaned forward, my head in my hands.

"Elsin, I have endured these four years, now, a thousand little stings which I could not resent. Forgetting this, at moments I blurt out a truth which, were matters otherwise with me, I might back with—what is looked for when a man repeats what may affront his listener. It is, in a way, unworthy, as you say, that I speak lightly to you of a man I can not meet with honor to myself. Yet, Elsin, were my duty first to you—first even to myself—this had been settled now—this matter touching you and Walter Butler—and also my ancient score with him, which is as yet unreckoned."

"What keeps you, then?" she said, and her voice rang a little.

I looked at her; she sat there, proud head erect, searching me with scornful eyes.

"A small vow I made," said I carelessly.

"And when are you released, sir?"

"Soon, I hope."

"Then, Mr. Renault," she said disdainfully, "I pray you swallow your dislike of Captain Butler until such time as you may explain your enmity to him."

The lash stung. I sat dazed, then wearied, while the tingling passed. Even the silence tired me, and when I could command my voice I said: "Shall we descend, madam? There is a chill in the sea-air."

"I do not feel it," she answered, her voice not like her own.

"Do you desire to stay here?"

"No," she said, springing up. "This silence of the stars wearies me."

She passed before me across the parapet and down the inclined way, I at her heels; and so into the dark parade, where I caught up with her.

"Have I angered you without hope of pardon?" I asked.

"You have spoiled it all for me——"

She bit her lip, suddenly silent. Sir Peter Coleville stood before us.

"Lady Coleville awaits you," he said very quietly, too quietly by far. "Carus, take her to my wife. Our coach is waiting."

We stared at him in apprehension. His face was

serene, but colorless and hard as steel, as he turned and strode away; and we followed without a word, drawing closer together as we moved through a covered passage-way and out along Pearl Street, where Sir Peter's coach stood, lamps shining, footman at the door.

Lady Coleville was inside. I placed Elsin Grey, and, at a motion from Sir Peter, closed the door.

"Home," he said quietly. The footman leaped to the box, the whip snapped, and away rolled the coach, leaving Sir Peter and myself standing there in Pearl Street.

"Your servant Dennis sought me out," he said, "with word that Walter Butler had been busy sounding the panels in your room."

Speech froze on my lips.

"Further," continued Sir Peter calmly, "Lady Coleville has shared with me the confidence of Elsin Grey concerning her troth, clandestinely plighted to this gentleman whom you have told me is a married man."

I could not utter a sound. Moment after moment passed in silence. The half-hour struck, then three-quarters. At last from the watch-tower on the Fort the hour sounded.

There was a rattle of wheels behind us; a coach clattered out of Beaver Street, swung around the railing of the Bowling Green, and drew up along the foot-path beside us; and Dr. Carmody leaped out, shaking hands with us both.

"I found him at Fraunce's Tavern, Sir Peter, bag and baggage. He appeared to be greatly taken aback when I delivered your cartel, protesting that something

was wrong, that there could be no quarrel between you and him; but when I hinted at his villainy, he went white as ashes and stood there swaying like a stunned man. Gad! that hint about his wife took every ounce of blood from his face, Sir Peter."

"Has he a friend to care for him?" asked Sir Peter coldly.

"Jessop of the Sappers volunteered. I found him in the tap-room. They should be on their way by this time, Sir Peter."

"That will do. Carus will act for me," said Sir Peter in a dull voice.

He entered the coach; I followed, and Dr. Carmody followed me and closed the door. A heavy leather case lay beside me on the seat. I rested my throbbing head on both hands, sitting swaying there in silence as the coach dashed through Bowling Green again and sped clattering on its way up-town.

CHAPTER VI

A NIGHT AND A MORNING

As our coach passed Crown Street I could no longer doubt whither we were bound. The shock of certainty aroused me from the stunned lethargy which had chained me to silence. At the same moment Sir Peter thrust his head from the window and called to his coachman:

"Drive home first!" And to me, resuming his seat: "We had nigh forgotten the case of pistols, Carus."

The horses swung west into Maiden Lane, then south through Nassau Street, across Crown, Little Queen, and King Streets, swerving to the right around the City Hall, then sharp west again, stopping at our own gate with a clatter and clash of harness.

Sir Peter leaped out lightly, and I followed, leaving Dr. Carmody, with his surgical case, to await our return.

Under the door-lanthorn Sir Peter turned, and in a low voice asked me if I could remember where the pistol-case was laid.

My mind was now clear and alert, my wits already busily at work. To prevent Sir Peter's facing Walter Butler; to avoid Cunningham's gallows; could the first be accomplished without failure in the second? Arrest might await me at any instant now, here in our own

house, there at the Coq d'Or, or even on the very field of honor itself.

"Where did you leave the pistol-case that day you practised in the garden?" I asked coolly.

"'Twas you took it, Carus," he said. "Were you not showing the pistols to Elsin Grey?"

I dropped my head, pretending to think. He waited a moment, then drew out his latch-key and opened the door very softly. A single sconce-candle flared in the hall; he lifted it from the gilded socket and passed into the state drawing-room, holding the light above his head, and searching over table and cabinet for the inlaid case.

Standing there in the hall I looked up the dark and shadowy stairway. There was no light, no sound. In the drawing-room I heard Sir Peter moving about, opening locked cupboards, lacquered drawers, and crystal doors, the shifting light of his candle playing over wall and ceiling. Why he had not already found the case where I had placed it on the gilded French table I could not understand, and I stole to the door and looked in. The French table stood empty save for a vase of shadowy flowers; Sir Peter was on his knees, candle in hand, searching the endless lines of book-shelves in the library. A strange suspicion stole into my heart which set it drumming on my ribs. Had Elsin Grey removed the pistols? Had she wit enough to understand the matters threatening?

I looked up at the stairs again, then mounted them noiselessly, and traversed the carpeted passage to her door. There was a faint light glimmering under the

sill. I laid my face against the panels and whispered, "Elsin!"

"Who is there?" A movement from within, a creak from the bed, a rustle of a garment, then silence. Listening there, ear to her door, I heard distinctly the steady breathing of some one also listening on the other side.

"Elsin!"

"Is it you, Carus?"

She opened the door wide and stood there, candle in one hand, rubbing her eyes with the other, lace night-cap and flowing, beribboned robe stirring in the draft of air from the dark hallway. But under the loosened neck-cloth I caught a gleam of a metal button, and instantly I was aware of a pretense somewhere, for beneath the flowing polonaise of chintz, or Levete, which is a kind of gown and petticoat tied on the left hip with a sash of lace, she was fully dressed, aye, and shod for the street.

Instinctively I glanced at the bed, made a quick step past her, and drew the damask curtain. The bed had not been slept in.

"What are you thinking of, Carus?" she said hotly, springing to the curtain. There was a sharp sound of cloth tearing; she stumbled, caught my arm, and straightened up, red as fire, for the hem of her Levete was laid open to the knee, and displayed a foot-mantle, under which a tiny golden spur flashed on a lacquered boot-heel.

"What does this mean?" I said sternly. "Whither do you ride at such an hour?"

She was speechless.

"Elsin! Elsin! If you had wit enough to hide Sir Peter's pistols, render them to me now. Delay may mean my ruin."

She stood at bay, eying me, uncertain but defiant.

"Where are they?" I urged impatiently.

"He shall not fight that man!" she muttered. "If I am the cause of this quarrel I shall end it, too. What if he were killed by Walter Butler?"

"The pistols are beneath your mattress!" I said suddenly. "I must have them."

Quick as thought she placed herself between me and the bed, blue eyes sparkling, arms wide.

"Will you go?" she whispered fiercely. "How dare you intrude here!"

Taken aback by the sudden fury that flashed out in my very face, I gave ground.

"You little wildcat," I said, amazed, "give me the pistols! I know how to act. Give them, I say! Do you think me a poltroon to allow Sir Peter to face this rascal's fire?"

She straightened with a sudden quiver.

"You! The pistols were for *you!*"

"For me and Walter Butler," I said coolly. "Give them, Elsin. What has been done this night has set me free of my vow. Can you not understand? I tell you he stands in my light, throwing the shadow of the gallows over me! May a man not win back to life but a chit of a maid must snatch his chance away? Give them, or I swing at dawn upon the common!"

A flush of horror swept her cheeks, leaving her staring. Her wide-flung arms dropped nervelessly and hung beside her.

"Is it *true*," she faltered—"what he came here to tell us on his way to that vile tavern? I gave him the lie, Carus. I gave him the lie there in the hall below." She choked, laying her white hand on her throat. "Speak!" she said harshly; "do you fear to face this dreadful charge he flung in my teeth? I"—she almost sobbed—"I told him that he lied."

"He did not lie. I am a spy these four years here," I said wearily. "Will you give me those pistols now? —or I take them by force!"

"Carus," called Sir Peter from the hall, "if Lady Coleville has my pistols, she must render them to you on the instant."

His passionless voice rang through the still, dark house.

"She has gone to the Coq d'Or," muttered Elsin Grey, motionless before me.

"To stop this duel?"

"To stop it. Oh, my God!"

There was a silence, broken by a quick tread on the stairs. The next moment Sir Peter appeared, staring at us there, candle flaring in his hand, his fingers striped with running wax.

"What does this mean?" he asked, confused. "Where is Lady Coleville?"

"She has gone to the Coq d'Or," I said. "Your pistols are hidden, sir."

He paled, gazing at Elsin Grey.

"She guessed that I meant to—to exchange a shot with Captain Butler?" he stammered.

"It appears," said I, "that Mr. Butler, with that delicacy for which he is notorious, stopped here on his way to the tavern. You may imagine Lady Coleville could not let this matter proceed."

He gazed miserably at Elsin, passing his hand over his haggard face. Then, slowly turning to me: "My honor is engaged, Carus. What is best now? I am in your hands."

I laid my arm in his, quietly turning him and urging him to the stairs. "Leave it to me," I whispered, taking the candle he held. "Go to the coach and wait there. I will be with you in a moment."

The door of Elsin's chamber closed behind us. He descended the black stairway, feeling his way by touch along the slim rail of the banisters, and I waited there, lighting him from above until the front doors clashed behind him. Then I turned back to the closed door of Elsin's chamber and knocked loudly.

She flung it wide again, standing this time fully dressed, a gilt-edged tricorn on her head, and in her hands riding-whip and gloves.

"I know what need be done," she said haughtily. "Through this meshed tangle of treachery and dishonor there leads but one clean path. That I shall tread, Mr. Renault!"

"Let the words go," I said between tightening lips, "but give me that pair of pistols now!"

"For Sir Peter's use?"

"No, for mine."

"I shall not!"

"Oh, you would rather see me hanged, like Captain Hale?"

She whitened where she stood, tugging at her gloves, teeth set in her lower lip.

"You shall neither fight nor hang," she said, her blue eyes fixed on space, busy with her gloves the while —so busy that her whip dropped, and I picked it up.

There was a black loup-mask hanging from her girdle. When her gloves were fitted to suit her she jerked the mask from the string and set it over her eyes.

"My whip?" she asked curtly.

I gave it.

"Now," she said, "your pistol-case lies hid beneath my bed-covers. Take it, Mr. Renault, but it shall serve a purpose that neither you nor Walter Butler dream of!"

I stared at her without a word. She opened the beaded purse at her girdle, took from it a heaping handful of golden guineas, and dropped them on her dresser, where they fell with a pleasant sound, rolling together in a shining heap. Then, looking through her mask at me, she fumbled at her throat, caught a thin golden chain, snapped it in two, and drew a tiny ivory miniature from her breast; and still looking straight into my eyes she dropped it face upward on the polished floor. It bore the likeness of Walter Butler. She set her spurred heel upon it and crushed it, grinding the fragments into splinters. Then she walked by me, slowly, her eyes still on mine, the hem of her foot-mantle slightly lifted; and so, turning her head to

watch me, she passed the door, closed it behind her, and was gone.

What the strange maid meant to do I did not know, but I knew what lay before me now. First I flung aside the curtains of her bed, tore the fine linen from it, burrowing in downy depths, under pillow, quilt, and valance, until my hands encountered something hard; and I dragged out the pistol-case and snapped it open. The silver-chased weapons lay there in perfect order; under the drawer that held them was another drawer containing finest priming-powder, shaped wads, ball, and a case of flints.

So all was ready and in order. I closed the case and hurried up the stairway to my room, candle in hand. Ha! The wainscot cupboard I had so cunningly devised was swinging wide. In it had been concealed that blotted sheet rejected from the copy of my letter to his Excellency—nothing more; yet that alone was quite enough to hang me, and I knew it as I stood there, my candle lighting an empty cupboard.

Suddenly terror laid an icy hand upon me. I shook to my knees, listening. Why had he not denounced me, then? And in the same instant the answer came: *He* was to profit by my disgrace; *he* was to be aggrandized by my downfall. The drama he had prepared was to be set in scenery of his own choosing. His savant fingers grasped the tiller, steering me inexorably to my destruction.

Yet, as I stood there, teeth set, tearing my finery from me, flinging coat one way, waistcoat another, and dressing me with blind haste in riding-clothes and boots,

I felt that just a single chance was left to me with honor; and I seized the passes that Sir Henry had handed me for Sir Peter and his lady, and stuffed them into my breast-pocket.

Gloved, booted, spurred, I caught up the case of pistols, ran down the stairs, flung open the door, and slammed it behind me.

Sir Peter stood waiting by the coach; and when he saw me with his pistol-case he said: "Well done, Carus! I had no mind to go hammering at a friend's door to beg a brace of pistols at such an hour."

I placed the case after he had entered the coach. Dr. Carmody made room for me, but I shook my head.

"I ride," I said. "Wait but an instant more."

"Why do you ride?" asked Sir Peter, surprised.

"You will understand later," I said gaily. "Be patient, gentlemen;" and I ran for the stables. Sleepy hostlers in smalls and bare feet tumbled out in the glare of the coach-house lanthorn at my shout.

"The roan," I said briefly. "Saddle for your lives!"

The stars were no paler in the heavens as I stood there on the grass, waiting, yet dawn must be very near now; and, indeed, the birds' chorus broke out as I set foot to stirrup, though still all was dark around me.

"Now, gentlemen," I said, spurring up to the carriage-door. I nodded to the coachman, and we were off at last, I composed and keenly alert, cantering at Sir Peter's coach-wheels, perfectly aware that I was riding for my liberty at last, or for a fall that meant the end of all for me.

There was a chaise standing full in the light of the tavern windows when we clattered up—a horse at the horse-block, too, and more horses tied to the hitching-ring at the side-door.

At the sound of our wheels Mr. Jessop appeared, hastening from the cherry grove, and we exchanged salutes very gravely, I asking pardon for the delay, he protesting at apology; saying that an encounter by starlight was, after all, irregular, and that his principal desired to wait for dawn if it did not inconvenience us too much.

Then, hat in hand, he asked Sir Peter's indulgence for a private conference with me, and led me away by the arm into a sweet-smelling lane, all thick with honeysuckle and candleberry shrub.

"Carus," he said, "this is painfully irregular. We are proceeding as passion dictates, not according to code. Mr. Butler has no choice but to accept, yet he is innocent of wrong intent, and has so informed me."

"Does he deny his marriage?" I asked.

"Yes, sir, most solemnly. The lady was his mistress, since discarded. He is quite guiltless of this affront to Sir Peter Coleville, and desires nothing better than to say so."

"That concerns us all," I said seriously. "I am acting for Sir Peter, and I assume the responsibility without consulting him. Where is Mr. Butler?"

"In the tap-room parlor."

"Say to him that Sir Peter will receive him in the coffee-room," I said quietly.

Jessop impulsively laid his honest hand upon my shoulder as we turned toward the tavern.

"Thank you, Carus," he said. "I am happy that I have to deal with you instead of some fire-eating, suspicious bullhead sniffing for secret mischief where none lies hid."

"I hear that Lady Coleville is come to stop the duel at any cost," I observed, halting at the door. "May we not hope to avoid a distressing scene, Jessop?"

"We must," he answered, as I left him in the hallway and entered the coffee-room where Sir Peter waited, seated alone, his feet to the empty fireplace.

"Where is Lady Coleville?" he asked, as I stepped up. "She must not remain here, Carus."

"You are not to fight," I said, smiling.

"Not to fight!" he repeated, slowly rising, eyes ablaze.

"Pray trust me with your honor," I replied impatiently, opening the door to a servant's knock. And to the wide-eyed fellow I said: "Go and say to Lady Coleville that Sir Peter is not to fight. Say to her——"

I stopped short. Lady Coleville appeared in an open doorway across the hall, her gaze passing my shoulder straight to Sir Peter, who stood facing her behind me.

"What pleasantry is this?" she asked, advancing, a pale smile stamped on her lovely face.

I made way. She stepped before me, walking straight to Sir Peter. I followed, closing the door behind me.

"Have I ever, ever in all these years, counseled you

to dishonor?" she asked. "Then listen now. There is no honor in this thing you seek to do, but in it there lies a dreadful wrong to me."

"He offered insult to our kin—our guest. I can not choose but ask the only reparation he can give," said Sir Peter steadily.

"And leave me to the chance of widowhood?"

Sir Peter whitened to a deathly hue; his distressed eyes traveled from her to me; he made to speak, but no sound came.

"This is all useless," I said quietly, as a knock came at the door. I stepped back and opened it to Walter Butler.

When he saw me his dark eyes lit up with that yellow glare I knew already. Then he turned, bowing to Lady Coleville and to Sir Peter, who, pale and astounded, stared at the man as though the fiend himself stood there before him.

"Sir Peter," began his enemy, "I have thought——"

But I cut him short with a contemptuous laugh.

"Sir Peter," I said, "Mr. Butler is here to say that he is not wedded to his Tryon County mistress—that is all; and as he therefore has not offended you, there is no reason for you to challenge him. Now, sir, I pray you take Lady Coleville and return. Go, in God's name, Sir Peter, for time spurs me, and I have business here to keep me!"

"Let Sir Peter remain," said Butler coldly. "My quarrel is not with him, nor his with me."

"No," said I gaily, "it is with me, I think."

"Carus," cried Lady Coleville, "I forbid you! What senseless thing is this you seek?"

"Pray calm yourself, madam," said Mr. Butler; "he stands in more danger of the gallows than of me."

Sir Peter pushed forward. I caught his arm, forcing him aside, but he struggled, saying: "Did you not hear the man? Let me go, Carus; do you think such an insult to you can pass me like a puff of sea-wind?"

"It strikes me first," I said. "It is to me that Mr. Butler answers."

"No, gentlemen, to *me!*" said a low voice behind us —the voice of Elsin Grey.

Amazed, we turned, passion still marring our white faces. Calm, bright-eyed, a smile that I had never seen imprinted on her closed lips, she walked to the table, unlocked the case of pistols, lifted them, and laid them there in the yellow lamplight.

"Elsin! Elsin!" stammered Lady Coleville; "have you, too, gone mad?"

"This is *my* quarrel," she said, turning on me so fiercely that I stepped back. "If any shot is fired in deference to me, *I* fire it; if any bullet is sped to defend my honor, *I* speed it, gentlemen. Why"—and she turned like a flash upon Sir Peter—"why do you assume to interfere in this? Is not an honest man's duty to his own wife first? Small honor you do yourself or her!—scant love must you bear her to risk your life to chance in a quarrel that concerns not you!"

Astounded and dumb, we stood there as though rooted to the floor.

She looked at Butler and laughed; picked up a pistol, loaded it with incredible deftness, laid it on the table, and began loading the other.

"Elsin! Elsin!" cried Lady Coleville, catching her by the waist, "what is this wild freak of yours? Have you all gone mad to-night?"

"You shake my hand and spill the powder," said the Hon. Miss Grey, smiling.

"Elsin," murmured Walter Butler, "has this fellow Renault poisoned you against me?"

"Why, no, sir. You are married to a wife and dare to court me! There lies the poison, Mr. Butler!"

"Hush, Elsin!" murmured Lady Coleville. "It was a mistake, dear. Mr. Butler is not married to the —the lady—to anybody. He swears it!"

"Not wedded?" She stared, then turned scarlet to her hair. And Walter Butler, I think, mistook the cause and meaning of that crimson shame, for he smiled, and drawing a paper from his coat, spread it to Sir Peter's eyes.

"I spoke of the gallows, Sir Peter, and you felt yourself once more affronted. Yet, if you will glance at this——"

"What is it?" asked Sir Peter, looking him in the eye.

"Treason, Sir Peter—a letter—part of one—to the rebel Washington, written by a spy!"

"A lie! *I* wrote it!" said the Hon. Miss Grey.

Walter Butler turned to her, amazed, doubting his ears.

"A jest," she continued carelessly, "to amuse Mr. Renault."

"Amuse *him!* It is in his own hand!" stammered Butler.

"Apparently. But I wrote it, imitating his hand to plague him. It is indifferently done," she added, with a shrug. "I hid it in the cupboard he uses for his love-letters. How came it in your fingers, Mr. Butler?"

In blank astonishment he stood there, the letter half extended, his eyes almost starting from his face. Slowly she moved forward, confronting him, insolent eyes meeting his; and, ere he could guess what she purposed, she had snatched the blotted fragment from him and crushed it in her hand, always eying him until he crimsoned in the focus of her white contempt.

"Go!" she said. Her low voice was passionless.

He turned his burning eyes from her to Lady Coleville, to Sir Peter, then bent his gaze on me. What he divined in my face I know not, but the flame leaped in his eyes, and that ghastly smile stretched the muscles of his visage.

"My zeal, it seems, has placed me at a sorry disadvantage," he said. "Error piled on error growing from a most unhappy misconstruction of my purposes has changed faith to suspicion, amity to coldness. I know not what to say to clear myself—" He turned his melancholy face to Elsin; all anger had faded from it, and only deepest sadness shadowed the pale brow. "I ventured to believe, in days gone by, that my devotion was not utterly displeasing—that perhaps the excesses

of a stormy and impetuous youth might be condoned in the humble devotion of an honest passion——"

The silence was intense. He turned dramatically to Sir Peter, his well-shaped hand opening in graceful salute as he bowed.

"I ask you, sir, to lend a gentle judgment till I clear myself. And of your lady, I humbly beg that mercy also." Again he bowed profoundly, hand on hilt, a perfect figure of faultless courtesy, graceful, composed, proudly enduring, proudly subduing pride.

Then he slowly raised his dark head and looked at me. "Mr. Renault," he said, "it is my misfortune that our paths have crossed three times. I trust they cross no more, but may run hereafter in pleasant parallel. I was hasty, I was wrong to judge you by what you said concerning the Oneidas. I am impatient, oversensitive, quick to fire at what I deem an insult to my King. I serve him as my hot blood dictates—and, burning with resentment that you should dare imperil my design, I searched your chamber to destroy the letter you had threatened warning the Oneidas of their coming punishment. How can you blame me if I took this lady's playful jest for something else?"

"I do not blame you, Captain Butler," I said disdainfully.

"Then may we not resume an intercourse as entertaining as it was full of profit to myself?"

"Time heals—but Time must not be spurred too hard," I answered, watching him.

His stealthy eyes dropped as he inclined his head in acquiescence.

Then Sir Peter spoke, frankly, impetuously, his good heart dictating ever to his reason; and what he said was amiable and kind, standing there, his sweet lady's arm resting on his own. And she, too, spoke graciously but gravely, with a gentle admonition trailing at the end.

But when he turned to Elsin Grey, she softened nothing, and her gesture committed him to silence while she spoke: "End now what you have said so well, nor add one word to that delicate pyramid of eloquence which you have raised so high to your own honor, Captain Butler. I am slow-witted and must ask advice from that physician, Time, whom Mr. Renault, too, has called in council."

"Am I, then, banished?" he asked below his breath.

"Ask yourself, Mr. Butler. And if you find no reply, then I shall answer you."

All eyes were on her. What magic metamorphosis had made this woman from a child in a single night! Where had vanished that vague roundness of cheek and chin in this drawn beauty of maturity? that untroubled eye, that indecision of caprice, that charming restlessness, that childish confidence in others, accepting as a creed what grave lips uttered as a guidance to the lesser years that rested lightly on her?

And Walter Butler, too, had noted some of this, perplexed at the reserve, the calm self-confidence, the unimagined strength and cold composure which he had once swayed by his passion, as a fair and clean-stemmed sapling tosses in tempests that uproot maturer growth.

His furtive, unconvinced eyes sought the floor as he

took his leave with every ceremony due himself and us. Dawn already whitened the east. He mounted by the tavern window, and I saw him against the pallid sky in silhouette, riding slowly toward the city, Jessop beside him, and their horses' manes whipping the rising sea-wind from the west.

"What a nightmare this has been!" whispered Lady Coleville, her husband's hands imprisoned in her own. And to Elsin: "Child! what scenes have we dragged you through! Heaven forgive us!—for you have learned a sorry wisdom here concerning men!"

"I have learned," she said steadily, "more than you think, madam. Will you forgive me if I ask a word alone with Mr. Renault?"

"Not here, child. Look! Day comes creeping on us yonder in the hills. Come home before you have your talk with Carus. You may ride with him if you desire, but follow us."

Sir Peter turned to gather up his pistols; but Elsin laid her hand on them, saying that I would care for everything.

"Sure, she means to have her way with us as well as with Walter Butler," he said humorously. "Come, sweetheart, leave them to this new wisdom Elsin found along the road somewhere between the Coq d'Or and Wall Street. They may be wiser than they seem; they could not well be less wise than they are."

The set smile on Elsin's lips changed nothing as Sir Peter led his lady, all reluctant, from the coffee-room, where the sunken candles flickered in the pallid light of morning.

From the front windows we saw the coach drive up, and Lady Coleville, looking back in protest, enter; and after her Sir Peter, and Dr. Carmody with his cases.

"Come to the door and make as though we meant to mount and follow," she said quietly. "Here, take these pistols. Raise the pan and lower the hammers. They are loaded. Thrust them somewhere—beneath your coat. Now follow me."

I obeyed in silence. As we came out of the tavern-door Lady Coleville nodded, and her coach moved off, passing our horses, which the hostlers were bringing round.

I put Elsin up, then swung astride my roan, following her out into the road—a rod or two only ere she wheeled into the honeysuckle lane, reining in so that I came abreast of her.

"Now ride!" she said in an unsteady voice. "I know the man you have to deal with. There is no mercy in him, I tell you, and no safety now for you until you make the rebel lines."

"I know it," I said; "but what of you?"

"What of me?" She laughed a bitter laugh, striking her horse so that he bounded forward down the sandy lane, I abreast of her, stride for stride. "What of me? Why, I lied to him, that is all, Mr. Renault. *And he knew it!*"

"Is that all?" I asked.

"No, not all. *He* told the truth to you and to Sir Peter. And *I* knew it."

"In what did he tell the truth?"

"In what he said about—his mistress." Her face

crimsoned, but she held her head steady and high, nor faltered at the word.

"How is it that you know?"

"How does a woman know? Tell me and I'll confess it. I know because a woman knows such things. Let it rest there—a matter scarcely fitted for discussion between a maid and a man—though I am being soundly schooled, God wot, in every branch of infamy."

"Then turn here," I said, reining in, "and ride no more with what men call a spy."

But she galloped on, head set, flushed and expressionless, and I spurred to overtake her.

"Turn back!" I said hoarsely. "It may go hard with you if I am taken at the lines!"

"Those passes that Sir Henry gave you—you have them?"

"Yes."

"For Sir Peter and his lady?"

"So they are made out."

"Do they know you at Kingsbridge?"

"Yes. The Fifty-fourth guard it."

"Then how can you hope to pass?"

"I shall pass one way or another," I said between my teeth.

She drew from her breast a crumpled paper, unfolded it, and passed it to me, galloping beside me all the while. I scanned it carefully; it was a pass signed by Sir Henry Clinton, permitting her and me to pass the lines, and dated that very night.

"How in Heaven's name did you secure this paper in the last nick of time?" I cried, astounded.

"I knew you needed it—from what you said there in my chamber. Do you remember that Sir Henry left the Fort for a council? It is not far to Queen Street; and when I left you I mounted and galloped thither."

"But—but what excuse——"

"Ask me not, Carus," she said impatiently, while a new color flowed through cheek and temple. "Sir Henry first denied me, then he began to laugh; and I —I galloped here with the ink all wet upon the pass. Whither leads this lane?"

"To the Kingsbridge road."

"Would they stop and search us if dissatisfied?"

"I think not."

"Well, I shall take no risk," she said, snatching the blotted paper from her bosom—the paper she had taken from Walter Butler, and which was written in my hand. "Hide it under a stone in the hedgerow, and place the passes that you had for Sir Peter with it," she said, drawing bridle and looking back.

I dismounted, turned up a great stone, thrust the papers under, then dropped it to its immemorial bed once more.

"Quick!" she whispered. "I heard a horse's iron-shod foot striking a pebble."

"Behind us?"

"Yes. Now gallop!"

Our horses plunged on again, fretting at the curb. She rode a mare as black as a crow save for three silvery fetlocks, and my roan's stride distressed her nothing. Into the Kingsbridge road we plunged in the white river-mist that walled the hedges from our view, and

there, as we galloped through the sand, far behind us I thought to hear a sound like metal clipping stone.

"You shall come no farther," I said. "You can not be found in company with me. Turn south, and strike the Greenwich road."

"Too late," she said calmly. "You forget I compromised myself with that same pass you carry."

"Why in God's name did you include yourself in it?" I asked.

"Because the pass was denied me until I asked it for us both."

"You mean——"

"I mean that I lied again to Sir Henry Clinton, Mr. Renault. Spare me now."

Amazed, comprehending nothing, I fell silent for a space, then turned to scan her face, but read nothing in its immobility.

"Why did you do all this for me, a spy?" I asked.

"For that reason," she answered sharply—"lest the disgrace bespatter my kinsman, Sir Peter, and his sweet lady."

"But—what will be said when you return alone and I am gone?"

"Nothing, for I do not return."

"You—you——"

"I ask you to spare me. Once the lines are passed there is no danger that disgrace shall fall on any one—not even on you and me."

"But how—what will folk say——"

"They'll say we fled together to be wedded!" she cried, exasperated. "If you will force me, learn then

that I made excuse and got my pass for that! I told Sir Henry that I loved you and that I was plighted to Walter Butler. And Sir Henry, hating Mr. Butler, laughed until he could not see for the tears, and scratched me off my pass for Gretna Green, with his choicest blessing on the lie I offered in return! There, sir, is what I have done. I said I loved you, and I lied. I shall go with you, then ask a flag of the rebels to pass me on to Canada. And so you see, Mr. Renault, that no disgrace can fall on me or mine through any infamy, however black, that others must account for!"

And she drew her sun-mask from her belt and put it on.

Her wit, her most amazing resource, her anger, so amazed me that I rode on, dazed, swaying in the stride of the tireless gallop. Then in a flash, alert once more, I saw ahead the mist rising from the Harlem, the mill on the left, with its empty windows and the two poplar-trees beside it, the stone piers and wooden railing of the bridge, the sentinels on guard, already faced our way, watching our swift approach.

As we drew bridle in a whirlwind of sand the guard came tumbling out at the post's loud bawling, and the officer of the guard followed, sauntering up to our hard-breathing horses and peering up into our faces.

"Enderly!" I exclaimed.

"Well, what the devil, Carus—" he began, then bit his words in two and bowed to the masked lady, perplexed eyes traveling from her to me and back again. When I held out the pass for his inspection, he took

it, scrutinizing it gravely, nodded, and strolled back to the mill.

"Hurry, Enderly!" I called after him.

He struck a smarter gait, but to me it seemed a year ere he reappeared with a pass viséed, and handed it to me.

"Have a care," he said; "the country beyond swarms with cowboys and skinners, and the rebel horse ride everywhere unchecked. They've an outpost at Valentine's, and riflemen along the Bronx——"

At that instant a far sound came to my ears, distant still on the road behind us. It was the galloping of horses. Elsin Grey leaped from her saddle, lifting her mask and smiling sweetly down at Captain Enderly.

"It's a sharp run to Gretna Green," she said. "If you can detain the gentleman who follows us we will not forget the service, Captain Enderly!"

"By Heaven!" he exclaimed, his perplexed face clearing into grinning comprehension. And to the sentries: "Fall back there, lads! Free way for'ard!" he cried. "Now, Carus! Madam, your most obedient!"

The steady thud of galloping horses sounded nearer behind us. I turned, expecting to see the horsemen, but they were still screened by the hill.

"Luck to you!" muttered Enderly, as we swung into a canter, our horses' hoofs drumming thunder on the quivering planks that jumped beneath us as we spurred to a gallop. Ah! They were shouting now, behind us! They, too, had heard the echoing tattoo we beat across the bridge.

"Pray God that young man holds them!" she whis-

pered, pale face turned. "There they are! They spy us now! They are riding at the bridge! Mercy on us! the soldiers have a horse by the bit, forcing him back. They have stopped Mr. Butler. *Now*, Carus!"

Into the sand once more we plunged, riding at a sheer run through the semidarkness of the forest that closed in everywhere; on, on, the wind whistling in our teeth, her hair blowing, and her gilt-laced hat flying from the silken cord that held it to her shoulder. How grandly her black mare bore her—the slight, pale-faced figure sitting the saddle with such perfect grace and poise!

The road swung to the east, ascending in long spirals. Then through the trees I caught the glimmer of water—the Bronx River—and beyond I saw a stubble-field all rosy in the first rays of the rising sun.

The ascent was steeper now. Our horses slackened to a canter, to a trot, then to a walk as the road rose upward, set with boulders and loose stones.

I had just turned to caution my companion, and was pointing ahead to a deep washout which left but a narrow path between two jutting boulders, when, without the slightest sound, from the shadow of these same rocks sprang two men, long brown rifles leveled. And in silence we drew bridle at the voiceless order from the muzzles of those twin barrels bearing upon us without a tremor.

An instant of suspense; the rifle of the shorter fellow swept from Elsin Grey to me; and I, menaced by both weapons, sat on my heavily breathing horse, whose wise head and questioning ears reconnoitered these

strange people who checked us at the rocky summit of the hill. For they were strange, silent folk, clothed in doeskin from neck to ankle, and alike as two peas in their caped hunting-shirts, belted in with scarlet wampum, and the fringe falling in soft cascades from shoulder to cuff, from hip to ankle, following the laced seams.

My roan had become nervous, shaking his head and backing, and Elsin's restive mare began sidling across their line of fire.

"Rein in, madam!" came a warning voice—"and you, sir! Stand fast there! Now, young man, from which party do you come?"

"From the lower," I answered cheerfully, "and happy to be clear of them."

"And with which party do you foregather, my gay cock o' the woods?"

"With the upper party, friend."

"Friend!" sneered the taller fellow, lowering his rifle and casting it into the hollow of his left arm. "It strikes me that you are somewhat sudden with your affections—" He came sauntering forward, a giant in his soft, clinging buckskins, talking all the while in an irritable voice: "Friend? Maybe, and maybe not," he grumbled; "all eggs don't hatch into dickey-birds, nor do all rattlers beat the long roll." He laid a sudden hand on my bridle, looking up at me with swaggering impudence, which instantly changed into amazed recognition.

"Gad-a-mercy!" he cried, delighted; "is it you, Mr. Renault?"

"It surely is," I said, drawing a long breath of relief to find in these same forest-runners my two drovers, Mount and the little Weasel.

"How far is it to the lines, friend Mount?"

"Not far, not very far, Mr. Renault," he said. "There should be a post of Jersey militia this side o' Valentine's, and we're like to see a brace of Sheldon's dragoons at any moment. Lord, sir, but I'm contented to see you, for I was loath to leave you in York, and Walter Butler there untethered, ranging the streets, free as a panther on a sunset cliff!"

The Weasel, rifle at a peaceful trail, came trotting up beside his giant comrade, standing on tiptoe to link arms with him, his solemn owl-like eyes roaming from Elsin Grey to me.

I named them to Elsin. She regarded them listlessly from her saddle, and they removed their round skull-caps of silver moleskin and bowed to her.

"I never thought to be so willing to meet rebel riflemen," she said, patting her horse's mane and glancing at me.

"Lord, Cade!" whispered Mount to his companion, "he's stolen a Tory maid from under their very noses! Make thy finest bow, man, for the credit o' Morgan's Men!"

And again the strange pair bowed low, caps in hand, the Weasel with quiet, quaint dignity, Mount with his elaborate rustic swagger, and a flourish peculiar to the forest-runner, gay, reckless, yet withal respectful.

A faint smile touched her eyes as she inclined her proud little head. Mount looked up at me. I nodded;

and the two riflemen wheeled in their tracks and trotted forward, Mount leading, and his solemn little comrade following at heel, close as a hound. When they had disappeared over the hill's rocky summit our horses moved forward at a walk, breasting the crest, then slowly descended the northern slope, picking their way among the loosened slate and pebbles.

And now for the first time came to me a delicious thrill of exaltation in my new-found liberty. Free at last of that prison city. Free at last to look all men between the eyes. Free to bear arms, and use them, too, under a flag I had not seen in four long years save as they brought in our captured colors—a ragged, blood-blackened rag or two to match those silken standards lost at Bennington and Saratoga.

I looked up into the cloudless sky, I looked around me. I saw the tall trees tinted by the sun, I felt a free wind blowing from that wild north I loved so well.

I drew my lungs full. I opened wide my arms, easing each cramped muscle. I stretched my legs to the stirrup's length in sweetest content.

Down through a fragrant birch-grown road, smelling of fern and wintergreen and sassafras, we moved, the cool tinkle of moss-choked watercourses ever in our ears, mingling with melodies of woodland birds—shy, freedom-loving birds that came not with the robins to the city. Ah, I knew these birds, being country-bred—knew them one and all—the gray hermit, holy chorister of hymn divine, the white-throat, sweetly repeating his allegiance to his motherland of Canada, the great scarlet-tufted cock that drums on the bark in stillest

depths, the lonely little creeping-birds that whimper up and down the trunks of forest trees, and the black-capped chickadee that fears not man, but cities—all these I listened to, and knew and loved as guerdons of that freedom which I had so long craved, and craved in vain.

And now I had it; it was mine! I tasted it, I embraced it with wide arms, I breathed it. And far away I heard the woodland hermits singing of freedom, and of the sweetness of it, and of the mercies of the Most High.

Thrilled with happiness, I glanced at Elsin Grey where she rode a pace or so ahead of me, her fair head bent, her face composed but colorless as the lace drooping from her stock. The fatigue of a sleepless night was telling on her, though as yet the reaction of the strain had not affected me one whit.

She raised her head as I forced my horse forward to her side. "What is it, Mr. Renault?" she asked coldly.

"I'm sorry you are fatigued, Elsin——"

"I am not fatigued."

"What! after all you have done for me——"

"I have done nothing for *you*, Mr. Renault."

"Nothing?—when I owe you everything that——"

"You owe me nothing that I care to accept."

"My thanks——"

"I tell you you owe me nothing. Let it rest so!"

Her unfriendly eyes warned me to silence, but I said bluntly:

"That Mr. Cunningham is not this moment fiddling

with my neck, I owe to you. I offer my thanks, and I remain at your service. That is all."

"Do you think," she answered quietly, "that a rebel hanged could interest me unless that hanging smirched my kin?"

"Elsin! Elsin!" I said, "is there not bitterness enough in the world but you and I must turn our friendship into hate?"

"What do you care whether it turn to hate or—love?" She laughed, but there was no mirth in her eyes. "You are free; you have done your duty; your brother rebels will reward you. What further have I to do with you, Mr. Renault? You have used me, you have used my kin, my friends. Not that I blame you—nay, Mr. Renault, I admire, I applaud, I understand more than you think. I even count him brave who can go out as you have done, scornful of life, pitiless of friendships formed, reckless of pleasure, of what men call their code of honor; indifferent to the shameful death that hovers like a shadow, and the scorn of all, even of friends—for a spy has no friends, if discovered. All this, sir, I comprehend, spite of my few years which once—when we were friends—you in your older wisdom found amusing." She turned sharply away, brushing her eyelashes with gloved fingers.

Presently she looked straight ahead again, a set smile on her tight lips.

"The puppets in New York danced to the tune you whistled," she said, "and because you danced, too, they never understood that you were master of the show. Oh, we all enjoyed the dance, sir—I, too, serving your

designs as all served. Now you have done with us, and it remains for us to make our exits as gracefully as may be."

She made a little salute with her riding-whip—gracious, quite free of mockery.

"The fortune of war, Mr. Renault," she said. "Salute to the conqueror!"

"Only a gallant enemy admits as much," I answered, flushing.

"Mr. Renault, am I your enemy?"

"Elsin, I fear you are."

"Why? Because you waked me from my dream?"

"What dream? That nightmare tenanted by Walter Butler that haunted you? Is it not fortunate that you awoke in time, even if you had loved him? But you never did!"

"No, I never loved him. But that was not the dream you waked me from."

"More than that, child, you do not know what love means. How should you know? Why, even I do not know, and I am twenty-three."

"Once," she said, smiling, "I told you that there is no happiness in love. It is the truth, Mr. Renault; there is no joy in it. That much I know of love. Now, sir, as you admit you know nothing of it, yc can not contradict me, can you?"

She smiled gaily, leaning forward in her saddle, stroking her horse's mane.

"No, I am not your enemy," she continued. "There is enough of war in the world, is there not, Mr. Renault? And I shall soon be on my way to

Canada. Were I your enemy, how impotent am I to compass your destruction—impotent as a love-sick maid who chooses as her gallant a gentleman most agreeable, gently bred, faultless in conduct and address, upon whose highly polished presence she gazes, seeking depth, and finds but her own silly face mirrored on the surface."

She turned from me and raised her head, gazing up through interlacing branches into the blue above.

"Ah, we must be friends, Carus," she said wearily; "we have cost each other too dear."

"I have cost you dear enough," I muttered.

"Not too dear for all you have taught me."

"What have I taught you?"

"To know a dream from the reality," she said listlessly.

"Better you should learn from me than from Walter Butler," I said bluntly.

"From him! Why, he taught me nothing. I fell in love again—really in love—for an hour or two—spite of the lesson he could not teach me. I tell you he taught me nothing—not even to distrust the vows of men. If it was a wrong he dared to meditate, it touches not me, Carus—touches me no more than his dishonoring hand, which he never dared to lay upon me."

"What do you mean?" I asked, troubled. "Have you taken a brief fancy to another? Do you imagine that you are in love again? What is it that you mean, Elsin?"

"Mean? God knows. I am tired to the soul, Carus. I have no pride left—not a shred—nothing of

resentment. I fancy I love—yes—and the mad fancy drags me on, trailing pride, shame, and becoming modesty after me in the dust." She laughed, flinging her arm out in an impatient gesture: "What is this war to me, Carus, save as it concerns him? In Canada we wag our heads and talk of rebels; here we speak of red-coats and patriots; and it's all one to me, Carus, so that no dishonor touches the man I love or my own Canada. Your country here is nothing to me except for the sake of this one man."

She turned toward me from her saddle.

"You may be right, you rebels," she said. "If aught threatened Canada, no loyalty to a King whom I have never seen could stir me to forsake my own people. That is why I am so bitter, I think; not because Sir Frederick Haldimand is kin to me, but because your people dared to storm Quebec."

"Those who marched thither march no more," I said gravely.

"Then let it be peace betwixt us. My enmity stops at the grave—and they march no more, as you say."

"Do you give me your friendship again, Elsin?"

She raised her eyes and looked at me steadily.

"It was yours before you asked me, Carus. It has always been yours. It has never faltered for one moment even when I said the things that a hurt pride forced from me." She shook her head slowly, reining in. I, too, drew bridle.

"The happiest moment of my life was when I knew that I had been the instrument to unlock for you the

door of safety," she said, and stripped the glove from her white fingers. "Kiss my hand and thank me, Carus. It is all I ask of friendship."

Her hand lay at my lips, pressed gently for an instant, then fell to her side.

"Dear, dear Elsin!" I cried, catching her hand in both of mine again, crushing it to my lips.

"Don't, Carus," she said tremulously. "If you—if you do that—you might—you might conceive a—a regard for me."

"Lord, child!" I exclaimed, "you but this moment confessed your fancy for a man of whose very name and quality I stand in ignorance!"

She drew her hand away, laughing, a tenderness in her eyes I never had surprised there before.

"Silly," she said, "you know how inconstant I can be; you must never again caress me as you did—that first evening—do you remember? If we do that—if I suffer you to kiss me, maybe we both might find ourselves at love's mercy."

"You mean we might really be in love?" I asked curiously.

"I do not know. Do you think so?"

I laughed gaily, bending to search her eyes.

"What is love, Elsin? Truly, I do not know, having never loved, as you mean. Sir Peter wishes it; and here we are, with all the credit of Gretna Green but none of the happiness. Elsin, listen to me. Let us strive to fall in love; shall we? And the devil take your new gallant!"

"If you desire it——"

"Why not? It would please all, would it not?"

"But, Carus, we must first please one another——"

"Let us try, Elsin. I have dreamed of a woman —not like you, but statelier, more mature, and of more experience, but I never saw such a woman; and truly I never before saw so promising a maid as you. Surely we might teach one another to love—if you are not too young——"

"I do not think I am," she said faintly.

"Then let us try. Who knows but you may grow into that ideal I cherish? I shall attend you constantly, pay court to you, take counsel with you, defer to you in all things——"

"But I shall be gone northward with the flag, Carus."

"A flag may not start for a week."

"But when it does?"

"By that time," said I, "we will be convinced in one fashion or another."

"Maybe one of us will take fire slowly."

"Let us try it, anyhow," I insisted.

She bent her head, riding in silence for a while.

"Sweetheart," I said, "are you hungry?"

"Oh!" she cried, crimson-cheeked, "have you begun already? And am I—am I to say that, too?"

"Not unless you—you want to."

"I dare not, Carus."

"It is not hard," I said; "it slipped from my lips, following my thoughts. Truly, Elsin, I love you dearly—see how easily I say it! I love you in one kind of way already. One of these days, before we

know what we're doing, we'll be married, and Sir Peter will be the happiest man in New York."

"Sir Peter! Sir Peter!" she repeated impatiently; a frown gathered on her brow. She swung toward me, leaning from her saddle, face outstretched.

"Carus," she said, "kiss me! Now do it again, on the lips. Now again! There! Now that you do it of your own accord you are advanced so far. Oh, this is dreadful, dreadful! We have but a week, and we are that backward in love that I must command you to kiss me! Where shall we be this day week—how far advanced, if you think only of courting me to please Sir Peter?"

"Elsin," I said, after a moment's deliberation, "I'm ready to kiss you again."

"For Sir Peter's sake?"

"Partly."

"No, sir!" she said, turning her head; "that advances us nothing."

After a silence I said again:

"Elsin!"

"Yes, Carus."

"I'm ready."

"For Sir Peter's sake?"

"No, for my own."

"Ah," she said gaily, turning a bright face to me, "we are advancing! Now, it is best that I refuse you—unless you force me and take what you desire. I accord no more—nothing more from this moment—until I give myself! and I give not that, either, until you take it!" she added, and cast her horse forward at a

gallop, I after her, leaning wide from my saddle, until our horses closed in, bounding on in perfect stride together. Now was my chance.

"Carus! I beg of you—" Her voice was stifled, for I had put my arm around her neck and pressed her half-opened lips to mine. "You advance too quickly!" she said, flushed and furious. "Do you think to win a maid by mauling whether she will or no? I took no pleasure in that kiss, and it is a shame when both are not made happy. Besides, you hurt me with your roughness. I pray you keep your distance!"

I did so, perplexed, and a trifle sulky, and for a while we jogged on in silence.

Suddenly she reined in, turning her face over her shoulder.

"Look, Carus," she whispered, "there are horsemen coming!"

A moment later a Continental dragoon trotted into sight around the curve of the road, then another and another.

We were within the lines at last.

CHAPTER VII

THE BLUE FOX

Elsin had slept all the bright morning through in her little room at the Blue Fox Tavern, whither Colonel Sheldon's horsemen had conducted us. My room adjoined hers, the window looking out upon the Bronx where it flowed, shallow and sunny, down from the wooded slopes of North Castle and Chatterton's Hill. But I heeded neither the sparkling water nor the trees swaying in the summer wind, nor the busy little hamlet across the mill-dam, nor Abe Case, the landlord, with his good intentions, pressed too cordially, though he meant nothing except kindness.

"Listen to me," I said, boots in hand, and laying down the law; "we require neither food nor drink nor service nor the bridal-chambers which you insist upon. The lady will sleep where she is, I here; and if you dare awaken me before noonday I shall certainly discharge these boots in your direction!"

Whereupon he seemed to understand and bowed himself out; and I, lying there on the great curtained bed, watched the sunlight stealing through the flowered canopy until the red roses fell to swaying in an unfelt wind, and I, dreaming, wandered in a garden with that lady

I sometimes saw in visions. And, Lord! how happy we were there together, only at moments I felt abashed and sorry, for I thought I saw Elsin lying on the grass, so still, so limp, that I knew she must be dead, and I heard men whispering that she had died o' love, and that I and my lady were to dig the grave at moonrise.

A fitful slumber followed, threaded by dreams that vaguely troubled me—visions of horsemen riding, and of painted faces and dark heads shaved for war. Again into my dream a voice broke, repeating, "Thendara! Thendara!" until it grew to a dull and deadened sound, like the hollow thud of Wyandotte witch-drums.

I slept, yet every loosened nerve responded to the relaxing tension of excitement. Twice I dreamed that some one roused me, and that I was dressing in mad haste, only to sink once more into a sleep which glimmered ever with visions passing, passing in processional, until at noon I awoke of my own accord, and was bathed and partly dressed ere the landlord came politely scratching at my door to know my pleasure.

"A staff-officer from his Excellency, Mr. Renault," he said, as I bade him enter, tying my stock the while.

"Very well," I said; "show him up. And, landlord, when the lady awakes, you may serve us privately."

He bowed himself out, and presently I heard spurs and a sword jingling on the stairs, and turned to receive his Excellency's staff-officer—a very elegant and polite young man in a blue uniform, faced with buff, and white-topped boots.

"Mr. Renault?" he asked, raising his voice and

eyebrows a trifle; and I think I never saw such a careless, laughing, well-bred countenance in which were set two eyes as shrewdly wise as the eyes of this young man.

"I am Mr. Renault," I said amiably, smiling at the mirth which twitched the gravity he struggled to assume.

"Colonel Hamilton of his Excellency's family," he said, making as elegant a bow as I ever had the honor to attempt to match.

We were very ceremonious, bowing repeatedly as we seated ourselves, he lifting his sword and laying it across his knees. And I admired his hat, which was new and smartly laced, and cocked in the most fashionable manner—which small details carry some weight with me, I distrusting men whose dress is slovenly from indifference and not from penury. His Excellency was ever faultless in attire; and I remember that he wrote in general orders on New Year's day in '76: "If a soldier can not be induced to take pride in his person, he will soon become a sloven and indifferent to everything."

"Mr. Renault," began Colonel Hamilton, "his Excellency has your letters. He regrets that a certain sphere of usefulness is now closed to you through your own rashness."

I reddened, bowing.

"It appears, however," continued Colonel Hamilton placidly, "that your estimate of yourself is too humble. His Excellency thanks you, applauds your modesty and faithfulness in the most trying service a

gentleman can render to his country, and desires me to express the same——"

He rose and bowed. I was on my feet, confused, amazed, tingling with pleasure.

"His Excellency said—*that!*" I repeated incredulously.

"Indeed he did, Mr. Renault, and he regrets that—ahem—under the circumstances—it is not advisable to publicly acknowledge your four years' service—not even privately, Mr. Renault—you understand that such services as yours must be, in a great measure, their own reward. Yet I know that his Excellency hesitated a long while to send me with this verbal message, so keenly did he desire to receive you, so grateful is he for the service rendered."

I was quite giddy with delight now. Never, never had I imagined that the Commander-in-Chief could single me out for such generous praise—me, a man who had lent himself to a work abhorrent—a work taken up only because there was none better fitted to accomplish a thing that all shrank from.

Seated once more, I looked up to see Colonel Hamilton regarding me with decorous amusement.

"It may interest you, Mr. Renault, to know what certain British agents reported to Sir Henry Clinton concerning you."

"What did they say?" I asked curiously.

"They said, 'Mr. Renault is a rich young man who thinks more of his clothes than he does of politics, and is safer than a guinea wig-stand!'"

His face was perfectly grave, but the astonished

chagrin on my countenance set his keen eyes glimmering, and in a moment more we both went off into fits of laughter.

"Lord, sir!" he exclaimed, dusting his eyes with a lace handkerchief, "what a man we lost when you lost your head! Why on earth did you affront Walter Butler?"

I leaned forward, emphasizing every point with a noiseless slap on my knee, and recounted minutely and as frankly as I could every step which led to the first rupture between Walter Butler and myself. He followed my story, intelligent eyes fixed on me, never losing an accent, a shade of expression, as I narrated our quarrel concerning the matter of the Oneidas, and how I had forgotten myself and had turned on him as an Iroquois on a Delaware, a master on an insolent slave.

"From that instant he must have suspected me," I said, leaning back in my chair. "And now, Colonel Hamilton, my story is ended, and my usefulness, too, I fear, unless his Excellency will find for me some place —perhaps a humble commission—say in the dragoons of Major Talmadge——"

"You travel too modestly," said Hamilton, laughing. "Why, Mr. Renault, any bullet-headed, reckless fellow who has done as much as you have done may ask for a commission and have it, too. Look at me! I never did anything, yet they found me good enough for a gun captain, and they gave me a pair o' cannon, too. But, sir, there are other places with few to fill them—far too few, I assure you. Why, what a shame to set you with a noisy, galloping herd of helmets, chasing

skinners and cowboys with a brace of gad-a-mercy pistols in your belt!—what a shame, I say, when in you there lie talents we seek in vain for among the thousand and one numskulls who can drill a battalion or maneuver a brigade!"

"What talents?" I asked, astonished.

"Lord! he doesn't even suspect them!" cried Hamilton gaily. "I wish you might meet a few of our talented brigadiers and colonels; *they* have no doubts concerning their several abilities!" Then, suddenly serious: "Listen, sir. You know the north; you were bred and born to a knowledge of the Iroquois, their language, character, habits, their intimate social conditions, nay, you are even acquainted with what no other living white man comprehends—their secret rites, their clan and family laws and ties, their racial instincts, their most sacred rituals! You are a sachem! Sir William Johnson was one, but he is dead. Who else living, besides yourself, can speak to the Iroquois with clan authority?"

"I do not know," I said, troubled. "Walter Butler may know something of the Book of Rites, because he was raised up in place of some dead Delaware dog!—" I clinched my hand, and stood silent in angry meditation. Lifting my eyes I saw Hamilton watching me, amazed, interested, delighted.

"I ask your indulgence," I said, embarrassed, "but when I think of the insolence of that fellow—and that he dared call me brother and claim clan kindred with a Wolf—the yellow Delaware mongrel!—" I laughed, glancing shamefacedly at Colonel Hamilton.

"In another moment," I said, "you will doubt there is white blood in me. It is strange how faithfully I cling to that dusky foster-mother, the nation that adopted me. I was but a lad, Colonel Hamilton, and what the Oneidas saw in me, or believed they saw, I never have accurately learned—I do not really know to this day!—but when a war-chief died they came to my father, asking that he permit them to adopt me and raise me up. The ceremony took place. I, of course, never lived with them—never even left my own roof—but I was adopted into the Wolf Clan, the noble clan of the Iroquois. And—I have never forgotten it—nor them. What touches an Oneida touches me!"

He nodded gravely, watching me with bright eyes.

"To-day the Long House is not the Five Nations," I continued. "The Tuscaroras are the Sixth Nation; the Delawares now have come in, and have been accepted as the Seventh Nation. But, as you know, the Long House is split. The Onondagas are sullenly neutral—or say they are—the Mohawks, Cayugas, Senecas, are openly leagued against us; the Oneidas alone are with us—what is left of them after the terrible punishment they received from the Mohawks and Senecas."

"And now you say that the Iroquois have determined to punish the Oneidas again?"

"Yes, sir, to annihilate them for espousing our cause. And," I added contemptuously, "Walter Butler dared believe that I would sit idle and never lift a warning finger. True, I am first of all a Wolf—but next am I an Oneida. And, as I may not sit in national council with my clan to raise my voice against this

punishment, and, as the Long House is rent asunder forever, why, sir, I am an Oneida first of all—after my allegiance to my own country—and I shall so conduct that Walter Butler and the Delaware dogs of a cleft and yellow clan will remember that when an Oneida speaks, they remain silent, they obey!"

I began to pace the chamber, arms folded, busy with my thoughts. Hamilton sat buried in meditation for a space. Finally he arose, extending his hand with that winning frankness so endearing to all. I asked him to dine with us, but he excused himself, pleading affairs of moment.

"Listen, Mr. Renault. I understand that his Excellency has certain designs upon your amiability, and he most earnestly desires you to remain here at the Blue Fox until such time as he summons you or sends you orders. You are an officer of Tryon County militia, are you not?"

"Only ensign in the Rangers, but I never have even seen their colors, much less carried them."

"You know Colonel Willett?"

"I have that very great honor," I said warmly.

"It *is* an honor to know such a man. Excepting Schuyler, I think he is the bravest, noblest gentleman in County Tryon." He walked toward the door, head bowed in reflection, turned, offered his hand again with a charming freedom, and bowed himself out.

Pride and deepest gratitude possessed my heart that his Excellency should have found me worthy of his august commendation. In my young head rang the words of Colonel Hamilton. I stood in the center of

the sunny room, repeating to myself the wonderful message, over and over, until it seemed my happiness was too great to bear alone; and I leaned close to the dividing door, calling "Elsin! Elsin! Are you awake?"

A sleepy voice bade me enter, and I opened the door and stood at the sill, while the brightly flowered curtains of her bed rustled and twitched. Presently she thrust a sleepy head forth, framed in chintz roses—the flushed face of a child, drowsy eyes winking at the sunbeams, powdered hair twisted up in a heavy knot.

"Goodness me," she murmured, "I am so hungry —so sleepy—" She yawned shamelessly, blinked with her blue eyes, looked at me, and smiled.

"What o'clock is it, Carus?" she began; then a sudden consternation sobered her, and she cried, "Oh, I forgot where we are! Mercy! To think that I should wake to find myself a runaway! Carus, Carus, what in the world is to become of me now? Where are we, Carus?"

"At the Blue Fox, near North Castle," I said gaily. "Why, Elsin—why, child, what on earth is the matter?"—for the tears had rushed to her eyes, and her woful little face quivered. A single tear fell, then the wet lashes closed.

"O Carus! Carus!" she said, "what will become of me? You did it—you made me do it! I've run away with you—why did you make me do it? Oh, why, why?"

Dumb, miserable, I could only look at her, finding no word of comfort—amazed, too, that the feverish spirit, the courage, the amazing energy of the night

before had exhaled, distilling now in the tears which dazed me.

"I don't know why I came here with you," she whimpered, eyes closed on her wet cheeks—"I must have been mad to do so. What will they say?—what will Rosamund say? Why don't you speak to me, Carus? Why don't you tell me what to do?"

And this from that high-strung, nerveless maid who had matured to womanhood in the crisis of the night before—seizing command of a menacing situation through sheer effrontery and wit, compelling fate itself to swerve aside as she led our galloping horses through the slowly closing gates of peril.

Her head drooped and lay on the edge of the bed pillowed by the flowered curtains; she rubbed the tears from her eyes with white fingers, drawing a deep, unsteady breath or two.

I had found my voice at last, assuring her that all was well, that she should have a flag when she desired it, that here nobody knew who she was, and that when she was dressed I was ready to discuss the situation and do whatever was most advisable.

"If there's a scandal," she said dolefully, "I suppose I must ask a flag at once."

"That would be best," I admitted.

"But there's no scandal yet," she protested.

"Not a breath!" I cried cheerfully. "You see, we have the situation in our own hands. Where is that wit, where is that gay courage you wore like magic armor through the real perils of yesterday?"

"Gone," she said, looking up at me. "I don't

know where it is—I—I was not myself yesterday. I was frightened—terror spurred me to things I never dreamed of when I thought of you hanging there on the Common——"

"You blessed child!" I cried, dropping on one knee beside her.

She laid her hand on my head, looking at me for a long while in silence.

"I can not help it," she said. "I really care nothing for what folk say. All this that we have done—and my indiscretion—nay, that we have run away and I am here with you—all this alarms me not at all. Indeed," she added earnestly, "I do truly find you so agreeable that I should have fretted had you gone away alone. Now I am honest with myself and you, Carus—this matter has sobered me into gravest reflection. I have the greatest curiosity concerning you—I had from the very first—spite of all that childish silliness we committed. I don't know what it is about you that I can not let you go until I learn more of you. Perhaps I shall—we have a week here before a flag goes north, have we not?" she asked naïvely.

"The flag goes at your pleasure, Elsin."

"Then it is my pleasure that we remain a while—and see—and see—" she murmured, musing eyes fixed on the sunny window. "I would we could fall in love, Carus!"

"We are pledged to try," I said gaily.

"Aye, we must try. Lord-a-mercy on me, for my small head is filled with silliness, and my heart beats only for the vain pleasure of the moment. A hundred

times since I have known you, Carus, I would have sworn I loved you—then something that you say or do repels me—or something, perhaps, of my own inconstancy—and only that intense curiosity concerning you remains. That is not love, is it?"

"I think not."

"Yet look how I set my teeth and drove blindly full tilt at Destiny when I thought you stood in peril! Do women do such things for friendship's sake?"

"Men do—I don't know. You are a faultless friend, at any rate. And on that friendship we must build."

"With your indifference and my vanity and inconstancy? God send it be no castle of cards, Carus! Tell me, have you, too, a stinging curiosity concerning me? Do you desire to fathom my shallow spirit, to learn what every passing smile might indicate, to understand me when I am silent, to comprehend me when I converse with others?"

"I—I have thought of these things, Elsin. Never having understood you—judging hastily, too—and being so intimately busy with the—the matters you know of—I never pursued my studies far—deeming you betrothed and—and——"

"A coquette?"

"A child, Elsin, heart-free and capricious, contradictory, imperious, and—and overyoung——"

"O Carus!"

"I meant no reproach," I said hastily. "A nectarine requires time, even though the sunlight paints it so prettily in all its unripe, flawless symmetry. And

I have—I have lived all my life in sober company. My father was old, my mother placid and saddened by the loss of all her children save myself. I had few companions—none of my own age except when we went to Albany, where I learned to bear myself in company. At Johnson Hall, at Varick's, at Butlersbury, I was but a shy lad, warned by my parents to formality, for they approved little of the gaiety that I would gladly have joined in. And so I know nothing of women—nor did I learn much in New York, where the surface of life is so prettily polished that it mirrors, as you say, only one's own inquiring eyes."

I seated myself cross-legged on the floor, looking up at the sweet face on the bed's edge framed by the chintz.

"Did you never conceive an affection?" she asked, watching me.

"Why, yes—for a day or two. I think women tire of me."

"No, you tire of them."

"Only when——"

"When what?"

"Nothing," I said quietly.

"Do you mean when they fall in love with you?" she asked.

"They don't. Some have plagued me to delight in my confusion."

"Like Rosamund Barry?"

I was silent.

"She," observed Elsin musingly, "was mad about you. No, you need not laugh or shrug impatiently—

I know, Carus; she was mad to have you love her! Do you think I have neither eyes nor ears? But you treated her no whit better than you treated me. That I am certain of—did you?"

"What do you mean?"

"*Did* you?"

"Did I do what?"

"Treat Rosamund Barry kinder than you did me?"

"In what way?"

"Did you kiss her?"

"Never!"

"Would you say 'Never!' if you had?"

"No, I should say nothing."

"I knew it!" she cried, laughing. "I was certain of it. But, mercy on us, there were scores more women in New York—and I mean to ask you about each one, Carus, each separate one—some time—but, oh, I am so hungry now!"

I sprang to my feet, and walking into my chamber closed the door.

"Talk to me through the keyhole!" she called. "I shall tie my hair in a club, and bathe me and clothe me very quickly. Are you there, Carus? Do you hear what I say?"

So I leaned against the door and chatted on about Colonel Hamilton, until I ventured to hint at some small word of praise for me from his Excellency. With that she was at the door, all eagerness: "Oh, Carus! I knew you were brave and true! Did his Excellency say so? And well he might, too!—with you, a gentleman, facing the vilest of deaths there in New York, year after

year. I am so glad, so proud of you, Carus, so happy! What have they made you—a major-general?"

"Oh, not yet," I said, laughing.

"And why not?" she exclaimed hotly.

"Elsin, if you don't dress quickly I'll sit at breakfast without you!" I warned her.

"Oh, I will, I will; I'm lacing—something—this very instant! Carus, when I bid you, you may come in and tie my shoulder-points. Wait a moment, silly! Just one more second. Now!"

As I entered she came up to me, turning her shoulder, and I threaded the points clumsily enough, I suppose, but she thanked me very sweetly, turned to the mirror, patted the queue-ribbon to a flamboyant allure, and, catching my hand in hers, pointed at the glass which reflected us both.

"Look at us!" she exclaimed, "look at the two runaways! Goodness, I should never have believed it, Carus!"

We stood a moment, hand clasping hand, curiously regarding the mirrored faces that smiled back so strangely at us. Then, somewhat subdued and thoughtful, we walked out through my chamber into a sunny little breakfast-room where landlord and servant received us a trifle too solemnly, and placed us at the cloth.

"Their owlish eyes mean Gretna Green," whispered Elsin, leaning close to me; "but what do we care, Carus? And they think us married in New York. Now, sir, if you ever wished to see how a hungry maid can eat Tapaan soupaan, you shall see now!"

The Tapaan hasty-pudding was set before us, and

in a twinkling we were busy as bees in clover. Pompions and clingstone peaches went the way of the soupaan; a dish of troutlings followed, and out of the corner of my eye I saw other dainties coming and rejoiced. Lord, what a pair of appetites were there! I think the Blue Fox must have licked his painted chops on the swinging sign under the window to see how we did full justice to the fare, slighting nothing set before us. And while the servants were running hither and thither with dishes and glasses I questioned the landlord, who was evidently prodigiously impressed with Colonel Hamilton's visit; and I gathered from mine host that, excepting for ourselves, all the other guests were officers of various degrees, and that, thanks to the nearness of the army and the consequent scarcity of skinners, business was brisk and profitable, for which he thanked God and his Excellency.

Elsin, resting one elbow on the table, listened and looked out into the village street where farmers and soldiers were passing, some arm in arm, gravely smoking their clay pipes and discussing matters in the sunshine, others entering or leaving the few shops where every sort of ware was exposed for sale, still others gathered on the bridge, some fishing in the Bronx, some looking on or reading fresh newspapers from New England or Philadelphia, or a stale and tattered Gazette which had found its way out of New York.

At a nod from me the landlord signaled the servants and withdrew, leaving us there alone together with a bottle of claret on the table and a dish of cakes and raisins.

"So these good folk are rebels," mused Elsin, gazing at the people in the street below. "They seem much like other people, Carus."

"They are," I said, laughing.

"Well," she said, "they told me otherwise in New York. But I can see no very great ferocity in your soldiers' countenances. Nor do they dress in rags. Mr. De Lancey told me that the Continentals scarce mustered a pair of breeches to a brigade."

"It has been almost as bad as that," I said gravely. "These troops are no doubt clothed in uniforms sent from France, but I fear there are rags and to spare in the south, where Greene and Lafayette are harrying Cornwallis—God help them!"

"Amen," she said softly, looking at me.

Touched as I had never been by her, I held out my hand; she laid hers in mine gravely.

"So that they keep clear of Canada, I say God speed men who stand for their own homes, Carus! But," she added innocently, "I could not be indifferent to a cause which you serve. Come over here to the window—draw your chair where you can see. Look at that officer, how gallant he is in his white uniform faced with green!"

"That is a French officer," I said. "Those three soldiers passing yonder who wear white facing on their blue coats, and black spatterdashes from ankle to thigh, are infantry of the New England line. The soldiers smoking under the tree are New York and New Jersey men; they wear buff copper-clouts, and their uniform is buff and blue. Maryland troops wear red facings; the

Georgia line are faced with blue, edged around by white. There goes an artilleryman; he's all blue and scarlet, with yellow on his hat; and here stroll a dozen dragoons in helmet and jack-boots and blue jackets laced, lined, and faced with white. Ah, Elsin, these same men have limped barefoot, half-naked, through snow and sun because his Excellency led them."

"It is strange," she said, "how you turn grave and how a hush comes, a little pause of reverence, whenever you name—his Excellency. Do all so stand in awe of him?"

"None names him lightly, Elsin."

"Have you ever seen him?"

"Never, child."

"And yet you approach even his name in hushed respect."

"Yes, even his name. I should like to see him," I continued wistfully, "to hear him speak once, to meet his calm eye. But I never shall. My service is of such a nature that it is inexpedient for him to receive me openly. So I never shall see him—save, perhaps, when the long war ends—God knows——"

She dropped her hand on mine and leaned lightly back against my shoulder.

"You must not fret," she murmured. "Remember that staff-officer said he praised you."

"I do, I do remember!" I repeated gratefully. "It was a reward I never dared expect—never dreamed of. His Excellency has been kind to me, indeed."

It was now past four o'clock in the afternoon, and Elsin, who had noted the wares in the shop-windows,

desired to price the few simple goods offered for sale; so we went out into the dusty village street to see what was to be seen, but the few shops we entered were full of soldiers and not overclean, and the wares offered for sale were not attractive. I remember she bought points and some stuff for stocks, and needles and a reel of thread, and when she offered a gold piece everybody looked at us, and the shopkeeper called her " My lady " and me " My lord," and gave us in change for the gold piece a great handful of paper money.

We emerged from the shop amazed, and doubtful of the paper stuff, and walked up the street and out into the country, pausing under a great maple-tree to sort this new Continental currency, of which we had enough to stuff a pillow.

Scrip by scrip I examined the legal tender of my country, Elsin, her chin on my shoulder, scrutinizing the printed slips of yellow, brown, and red in growing wonder. One slip bore three arrows on it, under which was printed:

Fifty Dollars.
Printed by H. A. L. L. and S. E. L.
1778.

Upon the other side was a pyramid in a double circle, surmounted by the legend:

Perennis.

And it was further decorated with the following:

" No. 16780 Fifty Dollars. This Bill entitles the Bearer to receive Fifty Spanish milled dollars or the

value thereof in Gold or Silver, according to the Resolution passed by Congress at Philadelphia, September 26th, 1788.

"J. WATKINS; I. K."

And we had several dozen of these of equal or less denomination.

"Goodness," exclaimed Elsin, "was my guinea worth all these dollars? And do you suppose that we could buy anything with these paper bills?"

"Certainly," I said, loyal to my country's currency; "they're just as good as silver shillings—if you only have enough of them."

"But what use will they be to me in Canada?"

That was true enough. I immediately pocketed the mass of paper and tendered her a guinea in exchange, but she refused it, and we had a pretty quarrel there under the maple-tree.

"Carus," she said at last, "let us keep them, anyhow, and never, never spend them. Some day we may care to remember this July afternoon, and how you and I went a-shopping as sober as a wedded pair in Hanover Square."

There was a certain note of seriousness in her voice that sobered me, too. I drew her arm through mine, and we strolled out into the sunshine and northward along the little river, where in shallow brown pools scores of minnows stemmed the current, and we saw the slim trout lying in schools under the bush's shadows, and the great silver and blue kingfishers winging up and down like flashes of azure fire.

A mile out a sentinel stopped us, inquiring our business, and as we had none we turned back, for it mattered little to us where we sauntered. Farmers were cutting hay in the river-meadows, under the direction of a mounted sergeant of dragoons; herds of cattle and sheep grazed among the hills, shepherded by soldiers. Every now and again dragoons rode past us, convoying endless lines of wagons piled up with barrels, crates, sacks of meal, and sometimes with bolts of coarse cloth.

To escape the dust raised by so many hoofs and wheels we took to the fields and found a shady place on a hill which overlooked the country. Then for the first time I realized the nearness of the army, for everywhere in the distance white tents gleamed against the green, and bright flags were flying from hillocks, and on a level plain that stretched away toward the Hudson I saw long dark lines moving, or halted motionless, with the glimmer of steel playing through the sunshine; and I, for the first time, beheld a brigade of our army at exercise.

We were too far away to see, yet it was a sight to stir one who had endured that prison city so long, never seeing a Continental soldier except as a prisoner marched through the streets to the jails or the hulks in the river. But there they were—those men of White Plains, of Princeton, of Camden, and of the Wilderness—the men of Long Island, and Germantown, and Stony Point!—there they were, wheeling by the right flank, wheeling by the left, marching and countermarching, drilling away, busy as bees in the July sun.

"Ah, Elsin," I said, "when they storm New York the man who misses that splendid climax will miss the best of his life—and never forget that he has missed it as long as he lives to mask his vain regret!"

"Why is it that you are not content?" she asked. "For four years you have moved in the shadow of destruction."

"But I have never fought in battle," I said; "never fired a single shot in earnest, never heard the field-horn of the light infantry nor the cavalry-trumpet above the fusillade, never heard the officers shouting, the mad gallop of artillery, the yelling onset—why, I know nothing of the pleasures of strife, only the smooth deceit and bland hypocrisy, only the eavesdropping and the ignoble pretense! At times I can scarcely breathe in my desire to wash my honor in the rifle flames—to be hurled pell-mell among the heaving, straining mêlée, thrusting, stabbing, cutting my fill, till I can no longer hear or see. Four years, Elsin! think of it—think of being chained in the midst of this magnificent activity for four years! And now, when I beg a billet among the dragoons, they tell me I am fashioned for diplomacy, not for war, and hint of my usefulness on the frontier!"

"What frontier?" she asked quickly.

"Tryon County, I suppose."

"Where that dreadful work never ceases?"

"Hatchet and scalping-knife are ever busy there," I said grimly. "Who knows? I may yet have my fill and to spare!"

She sat silent for so long that I presently turned from the distant martial spectacle to look at her in-

quiringly. She smiled, drawing a long breath, and shaking her head.

"I never seem to understand you, Carus," she said. "You have done your part, yet it appears already you are planning to go hunting about for some obliging savage to knock you in the head with a death-maul."

"But the war is not ended, Elsin."

"No, nor like to be until it compasses your death. Then, indeed, will it be ended for me, and the world with it!"

"Why, Elsin!" I laughed, "this is a new note in your voice."

"Is it? Perhaps it is. I told you, Carus, that there is no happiness in love. And, just now, I love you. It is strange, is it not?—when aught threatens you, straightway I begin to sadden and presently fall in love with you; but when there's no danger anywhere, and I have nothing to sadden me, why, I'm not at all sure that I love you enough to pass the balance of the day in your companionship—only that when you are away I desire to know where you are and what you do, and with whom you walk and talk and laugh. Deary me! deary me! I know not what I want, Carus. Let us go to the Blue Fox and drink a dish of tea."

We walked back to the inn through the sweetest evening air that I had breathed in many a day, Elsin stopping now and then to add a blossom to the great armful of wild flowers that she had gathered, I lingering, happy in my freedom as a lad loosed from school, now pausing to skip flat stones across the Bronx, now creeping up to the bank to surprise the trout and see

them scatter like winged shadows over the golden gravel, now whistling to imitate that rosy-throated bird who sits so high in his black-and-white livery and sings into happiness all who hear him.

The sun was low over the Jersey highlands; swarms of swallows rose, soared, darted, and dipped in the evening sky. I heard the far camp-bugles playing softly, the dulled roll of drums among the eastern hills; then, as the red sun went out behind the wooded heights, bang! the evening gun's soft thunder shook the silence. And our day was ended.

CHAPTER VIII

DESTINY

On Sunday, having risen early—though not so early as the post relief, whose day begins as soon as a sentry can see clearly for a thousand yards—I dressed me by the rosy light of the rising sun, and, before I breakfasted, wrote a long letter to my parents, who, as I have said, were now residing near Paris, where my great-grandfather's estate lay.

When I had finished my letter, sanded and sealed it, I went out to leave it with the packages of post matter collected from the French regiments across the Hudson, and destined for France by an early packet, which was to sail as soon as the long-expected French fleet arrived from the West Indies.

I delivered my letter to the staff-officer detailed for that duty, and then, hearing military music, went back to the Blue Fox in time to see a funeral of an officer slowly passing eastward, gun-carriage, horses, men, in strange silhouette against the level and dazzling white disk of the rising sun. Truly, the slow cortège seemed moving straight into the flaming gates of heaven, the while their solemn music throbbed and throbbed with the double drum-beat at the finish of each line. The tune was called "Funeral Thoughts." They changed to "Roslyn Castle" as they crossed the bridge; yet an hour

had scarce passed when I heard their volley-firing not very far away, and back they came, the Fife-Major leading, drums, fifes, and light-infantry horns gaily sounding "The Pioneer," and the men swinging back briskly to fall in with the Church details, now marching in from every direction to the admonitory timing of a single drum-beat.

The music had awakened Elsin, and presently she came a-tapping at my door, barefoot, her cardinal tightly wrapped around her, hair tumbled, drowsily rubbing her heavy lids.

"Good morning, Carus," she said sleepily. "I should dearly like to hear a good, strong sermon on damnation to-day—being sensible of my present state of sin, and of yours. Do they preach hell-fire in Rebeldom?"

"The landlord says that Hazen's mixed brigade and other troops go to service in the hay-field above the bridge," I answered, laughing. "Shall we ride thither?"

She nodded, yawning, then pulling her foot-mantle closer about her shoulders, pattered back into her chamber, and I went below and ordered our horses saddled, and breakfast to be served us as soon as might be.

And so it happened that, ere the robins had done caroling their morning songs, and the far, sweet anthems of the hermit-birds still rang in dewy woodlands, Elsin and I dismounted in Granger's hay-field just as the troops marched up in a long, dense column, the massed music of many regiments ahead, but only a single drum timing the steady tread.

All was done in perfect decorum and order. A hay-wagon was the pulpit; around it the drummers piled their drums, tier rising on tier; the ensigns draped the national colors over the humble platform, setting regimental and state standards at the corners; and I noted there some curious flags, one borne by a Massachusetts battalion, white, with a green tree on it; another, a yellow naval flag with a coiled rattlesnake; another, carried by a company of riflemen, on which was this design:

1776.

XI Virginia Reg't,

and I knew that I was looking upon the famous regimental standard of Morgan's Rifles.

Without confusion, with only a low-spoken command here and there, battalion after battalion marched up, stacked arms, forming three sides of a hollow square, the pulpit, with its flags and tiers of drums, making the fourth side. The men stood at ease, hands loosely clasped and hanging in front of them. The brigade chaplain quietly crossed the square to his rude pulpit, mounted it, and, as he bowed his head in prayer, every cocked hat came off, every head was lowered.

Country-folk, yokels, farmers, had gathered from all directions; invalids from the camp hospitals were there, too, faces clay-color, heads and limbs heavily bandaged. One of these, a sergeant of the New York line, who wore a crimson heart sewed on his breast, was led to his place between two comrades, he having both eyes shot out; and

the chaplain looked at him hard for a moment, then gave out the hymn, leading the singing in a deep, full voice:

"Through darkest night
I know that Thou canst see.
Night blinds my sight,
Yet my small voice shall praise Thee constantly.
Under Thy wing,
Whose shadow blinds mine eyes,
Fearless I sing
Thy sweetness and Thy mercy to the skies!"

The swelling voices of the soldiers died away. Standing there between our horses, Elsin's young voice still echoing in my ears, I looked up at the placid face of the preacher, saw his quiet glance sweep the congregation, saw something glimmer in his eyes, and his lips tighten as he laid open his Bible, and, extending his right arm, turn to the south, menacing the distant city with his awful text:

"The horseman lifteth up the bright sword and the glittering spear!

"Woe to the bloody city! The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the *broad ways!* They shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings. They shall make haste to the wall; the defense shall be prepared.

"For that day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness.

"A day of the trumpet and alarm against *fenced cities,* and against high towers.

"For the horseman lifteth up the bright sword. . . . Woe to the bloody city!"

Out over the sunlit fields rang the words of Zephaniah and of Nahum. I saw the motionless ranks suddenly straighten; a thousand sunburned faces were upturned, a thousand pairs of eyes fastened themselves upon the steady eyes of the preacher.

For an hour he spoke to them, beginning with his Excellency's ever-to-be-remembered admonition: "To the character of a patriot it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of a Christian"; then continued upon that theme nearest the hearts of all, the assault upon New York, which everybody now deemed imminent, thrilling the congregation with hope, inspiring them with high endeavor. I remember that he deprecated revenge, although the score was heavy enough! I remember he preached dignity and composure in adversity, mercy in victory, and at the word his voice rang with prophecy, and the long ranks stirred as dry leaves stir in a sudden wind.

When at last he asked the blessing, and the ranks had knelt in the stubble, Elsin and I on our knees breathed the Amen, lifted our sun-dazzled eyes, and rose together to mount and ride back through the dust to the Blue Fox, where we were to confer concerning the long-delayed letter which decency required us to write to Sir Peter and Lady Coleville, and also take counsel in other matters touching the future, which seemed as obscure as ever.

Since that first visit from Colonel Hamilton I had received orders from headquarters to be ready to leave

for the north at an hour's notice, and that suitable quarters would be ready at West Point for my wife.

There were a dozen officers lodged at the tavern, but my acquaintance with them advanced nothing beyond a civil greeting, for I cared not to join them in the coffee-room, where sooner or later some question concerning Elsin must annoy me. It was sufficient that they knew my name and nothing more either of my business or myself or Elsin. No doubt some quiet intimation from headquarters had spared us visits from quartermasters and provost marshals, for nobody interfered with us, and, when at the week's end I called for our reckoning—my habits of method ever uppermost in my mind—the landlord refused to listen, saying that our expenses were paid as long as we remained at the Blue Fox, and that if we lacked for anything I was to write to Colonel Hamilton.

This I had done, being sadly in need of fresh linen, and none to be had in the shops opposite. Also I enclosed a list of apparel urgently desired by Elsin, she having writ the copy, which was as long as I am tall; but I sent it, nevertheless, and we expected to hear from Colonel Hamilton before evening. For all we had was the clothing we wore on our backs, and though for myself I asked nothing but linen, I should have been glad of a change of outer garments, too.

We dined together at our little table by the window, decorously discussing damnation, predestination, and other matters fitting that sunny Sabbath noontide. And at moments, very, very far away, I heard the faint sound of church-bells, perhaps near North Castle, per-

haps at Dobbs Ferry, so sweet, so peaceful, that it was hard to believe in eternal punishment and in a God of wrath; hard, too, to realize that war ruled half a continent, and that the very dogs of war, unchained, prowled all around us, fangs bared, watching the sad city at the river's ends.

When the servants had removed the cloth, and had fetched the materials for writing which I had ordered, we drew our chairs up side by side, and leaned upon the table to confer in regard to a situation which could not, of course, continue much longer.

"The first thing to consider," said I, "is the flag to take you north." And I looked curiously at Elsin.

"How can we decide that yet?" she asked, aggrieved. "I shall not require a flag if we—fall in love."

"We've had a week to try," I argued, smiling.

"Yes, but we have not tried; we have been too happy to try. Still, Carus, we promised one another to attempt it."

"Well, shall we attempt it at once?"

"Goodness, I'm too lazy, too contented, too happy, to worry over such sad matters as love!"

"Well, then, I had better write to Hamilton asking a flag——"

"I tell you not to hasten!" she retorted pettishly. "Moonlight changes one's ideas. My noonday sentiments never correspond to my evening state of mind."

"But," I persisted, "if we only cherish certain sentiments when the moon shines——"

"Starlight, too, silly! Besides, whenever I take

time to think of your late peril, I straightway experience a tender sentiment for you. I tell you be not too hasty to ask a flag for me. Come, let us now consider and be wise. Once in Canada all is ended, for Sir Frederick Haldimand would sooner see me fall from Cape Eternity to the Saguenay than hear of me in love with you. Therefore I say, let us remember, consider, and await wisdom."

"But," I argued, "something must be settled before fresh orders from headquarters send me north and you to West Point."

"Oh, I shall go north, too," she observed calmly.

"Into battle, for example?" I asked, amused.

"I shall certainly not let you go into battle all alone! You are a mere child when it comes to taking precaution in danger."

"You mean you would actually gallop into battle to see I came to no mischief?" I demanded, laughing.

"Aye, clip my hair and dress the trooper, jackboots and all, if you drive me to it!" she exclaimed, irritated. "You may as well know it, Carus; you shall not go floundering about alone, and that's flat! See what a mess of it you were like to make in New York!"

"Then," said I, still laughing, yet touched to the heart, "I shall instruct you in the duties and amenities of wedded life, and we may as well marry and be done with it. Once married, I, of course, shall do as I please in the matter of battles——"

"No, you shall not! You shall consider me! Do you think to go roaming about, nose in the air, and leaving me to sit quaking at home, crying my eyes out

over your foolishness? Do I not already know the terror of it with you in New York there, and only ten minutes to save your neck from Cunningham? Thank you, I am already instructed in the amenities of wedded life—if they be like the pleasures of betrothal—though I cared not a whit what happened to Walter Butler, it is true, yet fell sick o' worry when you and Rosamund Barry went a-sailing—not that I feared you'd drown, either. O Carus, Carus, you distract me, you worry me; you tell me nothing, nothing, and I never knew what you were about there in New York when you were not with me!—doubtless a-courting every petticoat on Hanover Square, for all I know!"

"Well," said I, amazed and perplexed, "if you think, under the circumstances, there is any prospect of our falling in love after marriage, and so continuing, I will wed you—now——"

"No!" she interrupted angrily; "I shall not marry you, nor even betroth myself. It may be that I can see you leave me and bid you a fair journey, unmoved. I would to God I could! I feel that way now, and may continue, if I do not fall a-pondering, and live over certain hours with you that plague me at times into a very passion. But at moments like this I weary of you, so that all you say and do displeases, and I'm sick of the world and I know not what! O Carus, I am sick of life—and I dare not tell you why!"

She rested her head on her hands, staring down at her blurred image, reflected in the polished table-top.

"I have sometimes thought," she mused, "that the fault lay with you—somewhat."

"With me!"

"That you could force me to love you, if you dared. The rest would not matter, then. Misery me! I wish that we had never met! And yet I can not let you go, because you do not know how to care for yourself. If you will sail to France on the next packet, and remain with your mother, I'll say nothing. I'll go with a flag I care not where—only to know you are safe. Will you? O Carus, I would my life were done and all ended!"

She was silent for a while, leaning on the table, tracing with her finger the outline of her dull reflection in the shining surface. Presently she looked up gaily, a smile breaking in her eyes.

"All that I said is false. I desire to live, Carus. I am not unhappy. Pray you, begin your writing!"

I drew the paper to me, dipped a quill full of ink from the musty horn, rested my elbow, pen lifted, and began, dating the letter from the Blue Fox, and addressing it most respectfully to Sir Peter and Lady Coleville.

First I spoke of the horses we had taken, and would have promised payment by draft enclosed, but that Elsin, looking over my shoulder, stayed my pen.

"Did you not see me leave a pile of guineas?" she demanded. "That was to pay for our stable theft!"

"But not for the horse I took?"

"Certainly, for your horse, too."

"But you could not know that I was to ride saddle to the Coq d'Or!" I insisted.

"No, but I saddled *two* horses," she replied, de-

lighted at my wonder, "two horses, monsieur, one of which stood ready in the stalls of the Coq d'Or! So when you came a-horseback, it was not necessary to use the spare mount I had led there at a gallop. *Now* do you see, Mr. Renault? All this I did for you, inspired by—foresight, which you lack!"

"I see that you are as wise and witty as you are beautiful!" I exclaimed warmly, and caught her fingers to kiss them, but she would have none of my caress, urging me to write further, and make suitable excuse for what had happened.

"It is not best to confess that we are still unwedded," I said, perplexed.

"No. They suppose we are; let be as it is," she answered. "And you shall not say that you were a spy, either, for that must only pain Sir Peter and his lady. They will never believe Walter Butler, for they think I fled with you because I could not endure him. And—perhaps I did," she added; and that strange smile colored her eyes to deepest azure.

"Then what remains to say?" I asked, regarding her thoughtfully.

"Say we are happy, Carus."

"Are you?"

"Truly I am, spite of all I complain of. Write it!"

I wrote that we were happy; and, as I traced the words, a curious thrill set my pen shaking.

"And that we love—them."

I wrote it slowly, half-minded to write "one another" instead of "them." Never had I been so near to love.

"And—and—let me see," she mused, finger on lip —"I think it not too impudent to ask their blessing. It *may* happen, you know, though Destiny fight against it; and if it does, why there we have their blessing all ready!"

I thought for a long while, then wrote, asking their blessing upon our wedded union.

"*That* word 'wedded,'" observed Elsin, "commits us. Scratch it out. I have changed my mind. Destiny may accept the challenge, and smite me where I sit."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I mean—nothing. Yet that word 'wedded' must not stand. It is an affront to—to Destiny!"

"I fear nothing from Destiny—with you, Elsin."

"If you write that word, then, I tell you we must betroth ourselves this instant!—and fight Fate to its knees. Dare you?"

"I am ready," said I coolly.

She looked at me sidewise in quick surprise, chin resting in her clasped hands. Then she turned, facing me, dropping her elbows on the polished table.

"You would wed me, Carus?" she said slowly.

"Yes."

"Because—because—you—love me?"

"Yes."

A curious tremor possessed my body; it was not as though I spoke; something within me had stirred and awakened and was twitching at my lips. I stared at her through eyes not my own—eyes that seemed to open on her for the first time. And, as I stared, her face

whitened, her eyes closed, and she bowed her head to her hands.

"Keep pity for others," she said wearily; "keep your charity for some happier maid who may accept it, Carus. I would if I dared. I have no pride left. But I dare not. This is the end of all, I think. I shall never ask alms of Love again."

Then a strange thing happened, quick as a thrust; and my very soul leaped, quivering, smitten through and through with love of her. In the overwhelming shock I stretched out my hand like a man dazed, touching her fingers, and the thrill of it seemed to stun me.

Never, never could I endure to have her look at another as she looked at me when our hands touched, but I could not utter a word; and I saw her lip quiver, and the hopeless look deaden her eyes again.

I rose blindly to my feet, speechless, heart hammering at my throat, and made to speak, but could not.

She, too, had risen, gazing steadily at me; and still I could not utter a word, the blood surging through me and my senses swimming. Love! It blinded me with its clamor; it frightened me with its rushing tide; it dinned in my ears, it ran riot, sweeping every vein, choking speech, while it surged on, wave on wave mounting in flame.

She stood there, pallidly uncertain, looking on the conflagration love had wrought. Then something of its purport seemed to frighten her, and she shrank away step by step, passing the portal of her chamber, retreating, yet facing me still, fascinated eyes on mine.

I heard a voice unlike my own, saying: "I love you, Elsin. Why do you repulse me?"

And as she answered nothing, I went to her and took her hand. But the dismayed eyes only widened, the color faded from her parted lips.

"Can you not see," I whispered, "can you not see I love you?"

"You—*love*—me!"

I caught her in my arms. A bright blush stained neck and face, and she threw back her head, avoiding my lips.

"Elsin, I beg you—I beg you to love me! Can you not see what you have done to me?—how I am awakened?"

"Wait," she pleaded, resisting me, "wait, Carus. I—I am afraid——"

"Of love, sweetheart?"

"Wait," she panted—"give me time—till morning—then if I change not—if my heart stirs again so loudly when you hold me—thus—and—and crush me so close to you—so close—and promise to love me——"

"Elsin, Elsin, I love you!"

"Wait—wait, Carus!—my darling. Oh, you must not—kiss me—until you know—what I am——"

Her face burned against mine; her eyes closed. Through the throbbing silence her head drooped, lower, lower, yielding her mouth to mine; then, with a cry she turned in my arms, twisting to her knees, and dropped her head forward on the bed. And, as I bent beside her, she gasped: "No—no—wait, Carus! I know myself! I know myself! Take your lips from my hands

—do not touch me! My brain has gone blind, I tell you! Leave me to think—if I can——"

"I will not leave you here in tears. Elsin, Elsin, look at me!"

"The tears help me—help us both," she sobbed. "I know what I know. Leave me—lest the very sky fall to crush us in our madness——"

I bent beside her, a new, fierce tenderness choking me; and at my touch she straightened up, tear-stained face lifted, and flung both arms around my neck.

"I love you, Carus! I love you!" she stammered. "I care for that, only—only for that! If it be for a week, if it be for a day, an hour, an instant, it is what I was made for, it is what I was fashioned for—to love you, Carus! There is nothing else—nothing else in all the world! Love me, take me, do with me what you will! I yield all you ask, all you beg, all you desire —all save wedlock!"

She swayed in my arms. A deadly pallor whitened her; then her knees trembled and she gave way, sinking to the floor, her head buried in the flowering curtains of the bed; and I to drop on my knees beside her, seeking to lift her face while the sobs shook her slender body, and she wept convulsively, head prostrate in her arms.

"I—I am wicked!" she wailed. "Oh, I have done that which has damned me forever, Carus!—forever and ever. I can not wed you—I love you so!—yet I can not wed you! What wild folly drove me to go with you? What devil has dragged me here to tempt you—whom I love so truly? Oh, God pity us both—God pity us!"

"Elsin," I said hoarsely, "you are mad to say it! Is there anything on earth to bar us from wedlock?"

"Yes, Carus, yes!" she cried. "It is—it is too late!"

"Too late!" I repeated, stunned.

"Aye—for I am a wedded wife! Now you know! Oh, this is the end of all!"

A while she lay there sobbing her heart out, I upright on my knees beside her, staring at blank space, which reeled and reeled, so that the room swam all awry, and I strove to steady it with fixed gaze, lest the whole world come crashing upon us.

At last she spoke, lifting her tear-marred face from the floor to the bed, forehead resting heavily in her hands:

"I ask your pardon—for the sin I have committed. Hear me out—that is my penance; spurn me—that is my punishment!"

She pressed her wet eyes, shuddering. "Are you listening, Carus? The night before I sailed from Canada—*he* sought me——"

"Who?" My lips found the question, but no sound came.

"Walter Butler! O God! that I have done this thing!"

In the dreadful silence I heard her choking back the cry that strangled her. And after a while she found her voice again: "I was a child—a vain, silly thing of moods and romance, ignorant of men, innocent of the world, flattered by the mystery with which he cloaked his passion, awed, fascinated by this first melancholy

lover who had wrung from me through pity, through vanity, through a vague fear of him, perhaps, a promise of secret betrothal."

She lifted her head and set her chin on one clinched hand, yet never looked at me:

"Sir Frederick was abed; I all alone in the great arms-gallery, nose to the diamond window-panes, and looking out at the moon—and waiting for him. Suddenly I saw him there below. . . . Heaven is witness I meant no harm nor dreamed of any. He was not alone. My heart and my affections were stirred to warmth—I sailing from Canada and friends next day at dawn—and I went down to the terrace and out among the trees where he stood, his companion moving off among the trees. I had come only to bid him the farewell I had promised, Carus—I never dreamed of what he meant to do."

She cleared her hair from her brow.

"I—I swear to you, Carus, that never has Walter Butler so much as laid the weight of his little finger on my person! Yet he swayed me there—using that spell of melancholy, clothed in romance—and—I know not how it was—or how I listened, or how consented—it is scarce more than a dreadful dream—the trees in the moonlight, his voice so gentle, so pitiful, trembling, beseeching—and he had brought a clergyman"—again her hands covered her eyes—"and, ere I was aware of it, frightened, stunned in the storm of his passion, he had his way with me. The clergyman stood between us, saying words that bound me. I heard them, I was mute, I shrank from the ring, yet suffered it—for even as he

ringed me he touched me not with his hand. Oh, if he had, I think the spell had broken!"

Again her tears welled up, falling silently; and presently the strength returned to her voice, and she went on:

"From the first moment that I saw you, Carus, I understood what love might be. From the very first I closed my ears to the quick cry of caution. I saw you meet coquetry unmoved, I knew the poison of my first passion was in me, stealing through every vein; and every moment with you was the more hopeless for me. I played a hundred rôles—you smiled indifference on all. A mad desire to please you grew with your amused impatience of me. Curiosity turned to jealousy. I longed for your affection as I never longed for anything on earth—or heaven. I had never had a lover to love before. O Carus, I had never loved, and love crazed me! Day after day I wondered if I had been fashioned to inspire love in such a man as you. I was bewildered by my passion and your coldness; yet had I not been utterly mad I must have known the awful end of such a flame once kindled. But could I inspire love? Could you love me? That was all in the world I cared about —thinking nothing of the end, knowing all hope was dead for me, and nothing in life unless you loved me. O Carus, if I have inspired one brief moment of tenderness in you, deal mercifully with the sin! Guilty as I am, false as I am, I can not add a lie and say that I am sorry that you love me, that for one blessed moment you said you loved me. Now it is ended. I can not be your wife. I am too mean, too poor a thing for

hate. Deal with me gently, Carus, lest your wrath strike me dead here at the altar of outraged Love!"

I rose to my feet, feeling blindly for support, and rested against the great carved columns of the bed. A cold rage froze me, searching every vein with icy numbness that left me like a senseless thing. That passed; I roused, breathing quietly and deeply, and looked about, furtive, lest the familiar world around had changed to ashes, too.

Presently my dull senses were aware of what was at my feet, kneeling there, face buried in clasped hands, too soft, too small, too frail to hold a man's whole destiny. And, as I bent to kiss them, I scarce dared clasp them, scarce dared lift her to my arms, scarce dared meet the frightened wonder in her eyes, and the full sweetness of them, and the love breaking through their azure, as I think day must dawn in paradise!

"Now, in the name of God," I breathed, "we two, always forever one, through life, through death, here upon earth, and afterward! I wed you now with heart and soul, and ring your body with my arms! I stand your champion, I kneel your lover, Elsin, till that day breaks on a red reckoning with him who did this sin! Then I shall wed you. Will you take me?"

She placed her hands on my shoulders, gazing at me from her very soul.

"You need not wed me—so that you love me, Carus."

Arms enlacing one another, we walked the floor in silence, slowly passing from her chamber into mine, and back again, heads erect, challenging that Destiny whose shadowy visage we could now gaze on unafraid.

The dusk of day was dissolving to a silvery night, through which the white-throat's song floated in distant, long-drawn sweetness. The little stream's whisper grew louder, too; and I heard the trees stirring in slumber, and the breeze in the river-reeds.

There, at the open window, standing, she lifted her sweet face, looking into mine.

"What will you do with me? I am yours."

"Wait for you."

"You need not wait, if it be your will."

"It is not my will that we ever part. Nor shall we, wedded or not. Yet we must wait our wedded happiness."

"You need not, Carus."

"I know it and I wait."

"So then—so then you hold me innocent—you raise me back to the high place I fell from, blinded by love——"

"You never fell from your high place, Elsin."

"But my unpardonable sin——"

"What sin? The evil lies with him."

"Yet, wedded, I sought you—I loved you—I love you now—I offer my amends to you—myself to do with as it pleases you."

"Sweetheart, you could not stir from the high place where you reign enthroned though I and Satan leagued to pull you down. I, not you, owe the amends; I, not you, await your pleasure. Yours to command, mine to obey. Now, tell me, love, where my honor lies?"

"Linked with mine, Carus."

"And yours?"

"In the high places, where I sit unsullied, waiting for you."

For a long while we stood there together at the window. Candle-light faded from the dim casements of the shops; the patrol passed, muskets glittering in the starlight, and the tavern lamp went out.

And when the last tap-room loiterer had slunk away to camp or cabin, and when the echo of the patrol's tread had died out in the fragrant darkness, came one to the door below, hammering the knocker; and I saw his spurs and scabbard shining in the luster of the stars, and in my heart a still voice repeated, "This is Destiny came a-knocking, armed with Fate. This is the place and the hour!"

And it was so, for presently the landlord came to the door, calling me softly. "I come," I answered, and turned to Elsin. "Shall I to-morrow find you the same sweet maid I have loved from the first all blindly?—the same dear tyrant, plaguing me, coaxing me, blaming, praising, unreasoning, inconstant—the same brave, impulsive, loyal friend that one day, God willing, shall become my wife?"

"Yes, Carus."

We kissed one another; hands tightened, lingered, and fell apart. And so I went away down the dim stairs, strangely aware that Destiny was waiting there for me. And it was, shaped like Colonel Hamilton, who rose to meet me, offering the hand of Fate; and I took it and held it, looking him straight between the eyes.

"I know why you have come," I said, smiling. "I

am to journey north and move heaven and earth to thwart this hell's menace flung at us by Walter Butler. Ah, sir, I was certain of it—I knew it, Colonel Hamilton. You make me very, very happy. Pray you, inform his Excellency of my deep gratitude. He has chosen fire to fight fire, I think. Every thought, every nerve in me is directed to the ruin of this man. Waking, sleeping, in sickness, in health, in adversity, in prosperity, soul and body and mind are bent on his undoing. I shall speak to the Oneidas with clan authority; I shall speak to the Iroquois at Thendara; I shall listen to the long roll of the dead; I shall read the record of ages from the sacred belts. The eyes of the forest shall see for me; the ears of the wilderness listen for me; every tree shall whisper for me, every leaf spy for me; and the voices of a thousand streams shall guide me, and the eight winds shall counsel me, and the stars stretch out their beams for me, pointing the way, so that this man shall die and his wickedness be ended forever."

I held out my hand and took the written order in silence, reading it at a glance.

"It shall be done, Colonel Hamilton. When am I to leave?"

"Now. The schooner starts when you set foot aboard, Mr. Renault."

And, after a moment: "Madam goes with you?"

"To West Point."

"I trust that she finds some few comforts aboard the *Wind-Flower*. I could not fill all the list, Mr. Renault; but a needle will do much, and the French fabrics are pretty——"

He looked at me, smiling: "For you, sir, there are shirts and stockings and a forest dress of deerskin."

"A rifle, too?"

"The best to be had, and approved by Jack Mount. Murphy himself has sighted it. Have I done well?"

"Yes," said I grimly, and, opening the door of the kitchen, bade the landlord have our horses saddled and brought around, and asked him to send a servant to warn Elsin that we must leave within the quarter.

Presently I heard our horses at the block, stamping the sod, and a moment later Elsin came, eager, radiant, sweetly receiving Colonel Hamilton when I named him. He saluted her hand profoundly; then, as it still rested lightly on his fingers, he turned to me, almost bluntly: "Never, Mr. Renault, can we officers forgive you for denying us this privilege. I have heard, sir, that Mrs. Renault was beautiful and amiable; I never dreamed that such loveliness could be within our lines. One day you shall make amends for this selfishness to every lady and every officer on the Hudson."

At the word which named her as my wife her face crimsoned, but in her eyes the heavenly sweetness dawned like a star, dazzling me.

"Colonel Hamilton," she said, "in quieter days—when this storm passes—we hope to welcome you and those who care to wait upon a wife whose life is but a quiet study for her husband's happiness. Those whom he cares for I care for. We shall be glad to receive those he counts as friends."

"May I be one, Renault?" he said impulsively, offering both hands.

"Yes," I said, returning his clasp.

We stood silent a moment, Elsin's gloved fingers resting on my sleeve; then we moved to the door, and I lifted Elsin to the saddle and mounted, Hamilton walking at my stirrup, and directing me in a low voice how I must follow the road to the river, how find the wharf, what word to give to the man I should find there waiting. And he cautioned me to breathe no word of my errand; but when I asked him where my reports to his Excellency were to be sent, he drew a sealed paper from his coat and handed it to me, saying: "Open that on the first day of September, and on your honor, not one hour before. Then you shall hear of things undreamed of, and understand all that I may not tell you now. Be cautious, be wise and deadly. We know you; our four years' trust in you has proved your devotion. But his Excellency warns you against rashness, for it was rashness that made you useless in New York. And I now say to you most solemnly that I regard you as too unselfish, too good a soldier, too honorable a gentleman to let aught of a personal nature come between you and duty. And your duty is to hold the Iroquois, warn the Oneidas, and so conduct that Butler and his demons make no movement till you and Colonel Willett hold the checkmate in your proper hands. Am I clear, Mr. Renault?"

"Perfectly," I said.

He stepped aside, raising his cocked-hat; we passed him at a canter with precise salute, then spurred forward into the star-spangled night.

CHAPTER IX

INTO THE NORTH

Head winds, which began with a fresh breeze off King's Ferry and culminated in a three days' hurricane, knocked us about the Tappan Zee, driving us from point to cove; and for forty-eight hours I saw our gunboats, under bare poles, tossing on the gray fury of the Hudson, and a sloop of war, sprit on the rocks, buried under the sprouting spray below Dobbs Ferry. Safer had we been in the open ocean off the Narrows, where the great winds drive bellowing from the Indies to the Pole; but these yelling gales that burst from the Highlands struck us like the successive discharges of cannon, and the *Wind-Flower* staggered and heeled, reeling through the Tappan Zee as a great water-fowl, crippled and stung to terror, drives blindly into the spindrift, while shot on shot strikes, yet ends not the frantic struggle.

Once we were beaten back so far that, in the dark whirlwind of dawn, I saw a fire-ball go whirring aloft and spatter the eastern horizon. Then, through the shrilling of the tempest, a gun roared to starboard, and at the flash a gun to port boomed, shaking our decks. We had beaten back within range of the British lines, and the batteries on Cock Hill opened on us, and a guard-ship to the west had joined in. Southeast a red

glare leaped, and died out as Fort Tryon fired a mortar, while the *Wind-Flower*, bulwarks awash, heeled and heeled, staggering to the shelter of Tetard's Hill. Southward we saw the beacons ablaze, marking the *chevaux de frise* below Fort Lee, and on the Jersey shore the patrol's torches flashing along the fort road. But we had set a bit o' rag under Tetard's Hill, and slowly we crept north again past Yonkers, struggling desperately at Phillips, but making Boar's Hill and Dobbs Ferry by mid-afternoon. And that night the wind shifted so suddenly that from Tappan to Tarrytown was but a jack-snipe's twist, and we lay snug in Haverstraw Bay, under the lee of the Heights of North Castle, scarce an hour's canoe-paddle from the wharf where we had embarked four days before.

And now delay followed delay, a gunboat holding us twenty-four hours at Dobbs Ferry—why, I never knew—and, at the Chain, two days' delay were required before they let us pass.

When at last we signaled West Point, at the close of one long, calm August afternoon, through the flaming mountain sunset, the black fortress beckoned us to anchor, nor had we any choice but to obey the silent summons from those grim heights, looming like a thundercloud against the cinders of the dying sun.

That night a barge put out, and an officer boarded us, subjecting us to a most rigid scrutiny. Since the great treason a savage suspicion had succeeded routine vigilance; the very guns among the rocks seemed alive, alert, listening, black jaws parted to launch a thunderous warning. A guard was placed on deck; we

were not allowed to send a boat ashore; not even permitted to communicate with the fishing-smack and row-boats that hovered around us, curious as gulls around a floating plank.

And all this time—from the very instant of departure, through three days and a night of screaming winds and cataracts of water, through the delays where we rode at anchor below the Chain and Dobbs Ferry, under a vertical sun that started the pitch in every seam—Elsin Grey, radiant, transfigured, drenched to the skin, faced storm and calm in an ecstasy of reckless happiness.

Wild winds from the north, shouting among the mountains, winds of the forests, that tore the cries of exultation from our lips and scattered sound into space, winds of my own northland that poured through our veins, cleansing us of sordid care and sad regret and doubt, these were the sorcerers that changed us back to children while the dull roaring of their incantations filled the world. We two alone on earth, and the vast, veiled world spread round, outstretching to the limits of eternity, all ours to conquer, ours for our pleasure, ours to reign in till the moon cracked and the stars faded, and the sun went down forever and a day, and all was chaos save for the blazing trail of blessed souls, soaring to glory through the majesty of endless night.

In the sunlit calms, riding at our moorings, much we discussed eternity and creation. Doctrines once terrible seemed now harmless and without menace, dogmas dissolved into thinnest air, blown to the nothingness from whence they came; for, strangely, all teachings and creeds and laws of faith narrowed to the oldest of pre-

cepts; and, ponder and question as we might, citing prophet and saint and holy men inspired, all came to the same at last, expressed in that cardinal precept so safe in its simplicity—the one law embodied in one word governing heaven and commanding earth.

"Aye," said she, "but how interpret it? For a misstep means certain damnation, Carus. Once when I spelled out 'Love' for you, I stumbled and should have fallen had you not held me up."

"You held *me* up, sweetheart! I was closer to the brink than you."

She looked thoughtfully at the fortress; the shore was so near that, through the calm darkness, we could hear the sentinels calling from post to post and the ripple of the Hudson at the base of the rocks.

But these conferences concerning the philosophy of ethics overweighted two hearts as young as ours; and while our new love and the happiness of it at times reacted in solemn argument and the naïve searching of our souls, mostly a reckless delight in one another and in our freedom dominated; and we lived for the moment only, chary and shy of stirring slumbering embers that must one day die out or flash to a flame as fierce as that blaze that bars the gates of heaven from lost souls.

Knowing the need of haste, and having in my pocket instructions which I believed overweighed even the voiceless orders of the West Point cannon, I argued with the officer of the guard on deck, day after day, to let us go; but it was only after fifteen days' detention there at anchor that I found out that it was an order from his Excellency himself which held us there.

Then, one morning in early September, boats from the fortress put off loaded with provisions for the *Wind-Flower;* the guard disembarked in their barge, and an officer, in a cockle-shell, shouted: "Good luck to you! The Mouse-trap's sprung, and the Mouse is squeaking!" And with that he tossed a letter on deck. It was addressed to me:

"HEADQUARTERS, PHILADELPHIA,
"September 2d, '81.

"CARUS RENAULT, ESQ'RE:

"*Sir*—On receipt of this order you will immediately proceed from your anchorage off West Point to Albany, disembark, and travel by way of Schenectady to Johnstown, and from there to Butlersbury, where you will establish yourself in the manor-house, making it your headquarters, unless force of circumstances prevent. Fifty Tryon County Rangers, to be employed as one scout or several, are placed under your authority; the militia, and such companies of Continental troops as are now or may later be apportioned to Tryon County, will continue under the orders of Colonel Marinus Willett. Your duties you are already familiar with; your policy must emanate from your own nature and deliberate judgment concerning the situation as it is or as it threatens. Close and cordial cooperation with Colonel Willett, and with the various civil and military authorities in Tryon County, should eventually accomplish the object of your mission, which is, first, to prevent surprise from all invasion; second, to prevent a massacre of the Oneida Nation.

"Authority is herewith given you to open and read the sealed orders delivered to you by myself on your departure."

The letter was signed by Colonel Hamilton. I stared at his signature, then at the name of the city from whence the letter was dated—*Philadelphia.* What in Heaven's name were "Headquarters" doing in Philadelphia? Was his Excellency there? Was the army there? Impossible—the army which for months had been preparing to storm New York?—impossible!

I thrust my hand into the breast-pocket of my coat, drew out the sealed orders, tore them open, and read:

"Until further notice such reports as you are required to render to his Excellency, the Commander-in-Chief, should be sent to headquarters, near Yorktown, Virginia——"

Virginia! The army that I had seen at Dobbs Ferry, at White Plains, at North Castle, was that army on its way to Virginia? What! hurl an entire army a thousand miles southward? And had Sir Henry Clinton permitted it?

In a sort of stupor I read and reread the astonishing words: "Virginia? There was a British army in Virginia. Yorktown? Yes, that British army was at Yorktown, practically at bay, with a youth of twenty-three—my own age—harassing it—the young General Lafayette! Greene, too, was there, his chivalry cutting up the light troops of General Lord Cornwallis——"

"By Heaven!" I cried, springing to my feet, "his Excellency never meant to storm New York! The French fleet has sailed for the Chesapeake! Lafayette

is there, Greene is there, Morgan, Sumter, Lee, Pickens, all are there! His Excellency has gone to catch Cornwallis in a mouse-trap, and Sir Henry is duped!"

Mad with excitement and delight, I looked up at the great fortress on the river, and knew that it was safe in its magnificent isolation—safe with its guns and ramparts and its four thousand men—knew that the key to the Hudson was ours, and would remain ours, although the army, like a gigantic dragon, had lifted its great wings and soared southward, so silently that none, not even the British spies, had dreamed its destination was other than the city of New York.

And, as I looked, the signals on the fortress changed; the guard-boats hailed us, the harmless river-craft gave us right of way, and we spread our white sails once more, drawing slowly northward, under the rocky pulpits of the heights, past shore forests yet unbroken, edged with acres of reeds and marshes, from which the water-fowl arose in clouds; past pine-crowned capes and mountains, whose bases were bathed in the great river; past lonely little islands, on, on, into the purple mystery of the silent north.

Now there remained no high sky-bastion to halt us with voiceless signal and dumb cannon, nothing beyond but Albany; and, beyond Albany, the frontier; and beyond the frontier a hellish war of murder and the torch, a ceaseless conflict of dreadful reprisals, sterile triumphs, terrible vengeance, a saturnalia of private feuds, which spared neither the infirm nor the infant—nay, the very watch-dog at the door received no quarter in the holocaust.

Elsin had begged and begged that she should not be left there at West Point, saying that Albany was safer, though I doubted the question of safety weighed in her choice; but she pleaded so reasonably, so sweetly, arms around my neck, and her lips whispering so that my cheek felt their soft flutter, that I consented. There I was foolish, for no sooner were we in sight of the Albany hills than arms and lips were persuading again, guilelessly explaining how simple it would be for her to live at Johnstown, while I, at Butlersbury, busied myself with my own affairs.

And so we stood in earnest conference, while nearer and nearer loomed the hills, with the Dutch town atop, brick houses, tiled roofs, steep streets, becoming plainer and plainer to the eye.

There seemed to be an unusual amount of shipping at the Albany wharves as we glided in, and a great number of wagons and people scurrying about. In fact, I had never before observed such a bustle in Albany streets, but thought nothing of it at the moment, for I had not seen the town since war began. As the schooner dropped anchor at the wharf we were still arguing; as, arm in arm, we followed our two horses and our sea-chests which the men bore shoreward and up the steep hill to the Half-Moon Tavern, we argued every step; at the tavern we argued, she in her chamber, I in mine, the door open between; argued and argued, finally rising in our earnestness and meeting on the common threshold to continue a discussion in which tears, lips, and arms soon supplanted logic and reason.

Had she remained at West Point, although that for-

tress could not have been taken except by a regular siege, still she might have been subjected to all the horrors of blockade and bombardment, for since his Excellency had abandoned the Hudson with his army and was already half-way to Virginia, nothing now stood between West Point and the heavy British garrison of New York.

It was my knowledge of that more than her pleading that reconciled me to leave her in Albany.

But I was soon to learn that she was by no means secure in the choice I had made for her; for presently she retired to her own chamber and lay down on her bed to rest for an hour or so before supper, in order to recover from the fatigue and the constant motion of the long voyage; and I went out into the town to inquire where Colonel Willett might be found.

The sluggish Dutch burghers of Albany appeared to be active enough that lovely September afternoon; hurrying hither and thither through the streets, and not one among them sufficiently civil to stop and give me an answer to my question concerning Colonel Willett. At first I could make nothing of this amazing bustle and hurry; wagons, loaded with household furniture, clattered through the streets or toiled up and down the hills, discharging bedding, pots and pans, chairs, tables, the family clock, and Heaven knows what, on to the wharves, where a great many sloops and other craft were moored, the *Wind-Flower* among them.

In the streets, too, wagons were standing before fine residences and shops; servants and black slaves piled them high with all manner of goods. I even saw a green parrot in a cage, perched atop of a pile of corded bed-

ding, and the bird cocked his head and called out continually: "Gad-a-mercy! Gad-a-mercy! Gad-a-mercy!"

An invalid soldier of Colonel Livingston's regiment, his right arm bandaged in splints, was standing across the street, apparently vastly amused by the bird in the wagon; and I crossed over to him and asked what all this exodus might signify.

"Why, the town is in a monstrous fright, friend," he drawled, cradling his shattered arm and puffing away at his cob-pipe. "Since April, when them red-devils of Brant's struck Cherry Valley for the second time, and cleaned up some score and odd women and children, these here thrifty Dutchmen in Albany have been ready to pack up and pull foot at the first breath o' foul news."

"But," said I, "what news has alarmed them now?"

"Hey? Scairt 'em? Waal, rumors is thicker than spotted flies in the sugar-bush. Some say the enemy are a-scalping at Torlock, some say Little Falls. We heard last week that Schenectady was threatened. It may be true, for there's a pest o' Tories loose in the outlying county, and them there bloody Iroquois skulk around the farms and shoot little children in their own dooryards."

"Do you believe there is any danger in Albany?" I asked incredulously.

He shrugged his shoulders, nursing his bandaged arm.

Then, troubled and apprehensive, I asked him where I might find Colonel Willett, and he said that a scout was now out toward Johnstown, and that Willett led it. This was all he knew, all the information I could

get from him. Returning along the dusty, steep streets to the Half-Moon Tavern, I called in the stolid Dutch landlord, requesting information; but he knew nothing at all except that a number of timid people were packing up because an express had come in the night before with news that a body of Tories and Indians had attacked Cobleskill, taken a Mr. Warner, and murdered the entire family of a Captain Dietz—father, mother, wife, four little children, and a Scotch servant-girl, Jessie Dean.

Observing the horror with which I received the news he shook his head, pulled at his long pipe for a few moments in thoughtful silence, and said:

"What shall we do, sir? They kill us everywhere. Better die at home than in the bush. I think a man's as safe here in Albany as in any place, unless he quits all and leaves affairs to go to ruin to skulk in one o' the valley forts. But they've even burned Stanwix now, and the blockhouses are poor defense against Iroquois fire-arrows. If I had a wife I'd take her to Johnstown Fort; it's built of stone, they say. Besides, Marinus Willett is there. I wish to God he were here!"

We lingered in the empty tap-room for a while, talking in low voices of the peril; and I was certainly amazed, so utterly unprepared was I to find such a town as Albany in danger from the roaming scalping parties infesting the frontier.

Still, had my own headquarters been in Albany, I should have considered it the proper place for Elsin; but under these ominous, unlooked-for conditions I dared not leave her here, even domiciled with some family of my acquaintance, as I had intended. Indeed, I learned

that the young patroon himself had gone to Heldeberg to arm his tenantry, and I knew that when Stephen Van Rensselaer took alarm it was not at the idle whistling of a kill-deer plover.

As far as I could see there was now nothing for Elsin but to go forward with me—strange irony of fate! —to Johnstown, perhaps to Butlersbury, the late residence of that mortal enemy of mine, who had brought upon her this dreadful trouble. How great a trouble it might prove to be I dared not yet consider, for the faint hope was ever in me that this unholy marriage might not stand the search of Tryon County's parish records—that the poor creature he had cast off might not have been his mistress after all, but his wife. Yes, I dared hope that he had lied, remembering what Mount and the Weasel told me. At any rate, I had long since determined to search what parish records might remain undestroyed in a land where destruction had reigned for four terrible years. That, and the chance that I might slay him if he appeared as he had threatened, were the two fixed ideas that persisted. There was little certainty, however, in either case, for, as I say, the records, if extant, might only confirm his pledged word, and, on the other hand, I was engaged by all laws of honor not to permit a private enmity to swerve me from my public duty. Therefore, I could neither abandon all else to hunt him down if he appeared as he promised to appear, nor take time in record-searching, unless the documents were close at hand.

Perplexed, more than anxious, I went up-stairs and entered my chamber. The door between our rooms still

swung open, and, as I stepped forward to close it, I saw Elsin there, asleep on her bed, fingers doubled up in her rosy palms. So young, so pitifully alone she seemed, lying there sleep-flushed, face upturned, that my eyes dimmed as I gazed. Bitter doubts assailed me. I knew that I should have asked a flag and sent her north to Sir Frederick Haldimand—even though it meant a final separation for us—rather than risk the chances of my living through the armed encounter, the intrigues, the violence which were so surely approaching. I could do so still; it was not too late. Colonel Willett would give me a flag!

Miserable, undecided, overwhelmed with self-reproach, I stood there looking upon the unconscious sleeper. Sunlight faded from the patterned wall; that violet tint, which lingers with us in the north after the sun has set, deepened to a sadder color, then slowly thickened to obscurity; and from the window I saw the new moon hanging through tangled branches, dull as a silver-poplar leaf in November.

What if I die here on the frontier? The question persisted, repeating itself again and again. And my thoughts ran on in somber disorder: If I die—then we shall never know wedded happiness—never know the sweetest of intimacies. Our lives, uncompleted, what meaning is there in such lives? As for me, were my life to end all incomplete, why was I born? To live on, year after year, escaping the perils all are heir to, and then, when for the first instant life's true meaning is disclosed, to die, sterile, blighting, desolating another life, too? And must we put away offered happiness to

wait on custom at our peril?—to sit cowed before convention, juggling with death and passion?

Darkness around me, darkness in my soul, I stood staring at her where she lay, arms bent back and small hands doubled up; and an overwhelming rush of tenderness and apprehension drew me forward to bend above her, hovering there, awed by the beauty of her—the pure lids, the lashes resting on the cheeks, the red mouth so exquisitely tranquil, curled like a scarlet petal of a flower fallen on snow.

Her love and mine! What cared we for laws that barred it?—what mattered any law that dared attempt to link her destiny with that man who might, perhaps, wear a title as her husband—and might not. Who joined them? No God that I feared or worshiped. Then, why should I not sunder a pact inspired by hell itself; and if the law of the land made by men of the land permitted us no sanctuary in wedlock, then why did we not seek that shelter in a happiness the law forbids, inspired by a passion no law could forbid?

I had but to reach forward, to bend and touch her, and where was Death's triumph if I fell at last? What vague and terrible justice could rob us of these hours? Never, never had I loved her as I did then. She breathed so quietly, lying there, that I could not see her body stir; her stillness awed me, fascinated me; so still, so inert, so marvelously motionless, that her very soul seemed asleep within her. Should I awake her, this child whose calm, closed lids, whose soft lashes and tinted skin, whose young soul and body were in my keeping here under a strange roof, in a strange land?

Slowly, very slowly, a fear grew in me that took the shape of horror. My reasoning was the reasoning of Walter Butler!—my argument his damning creed! Dazed, shaken, I sank to my knees, overwhelmed by my own perfidy; and she stirred in her slumber and stretched out one little hand. All the chivalry, all the manhood in me responded to that appeal in a passion of loyalty which swept my somber heart clean of selfishness.

And there in the darkness I learned the lesson that she believed I had taught to her—a lesson so easily forgotten when the heart's loud clamor drowns all else, and every pulse throbs reckless response. And it was cold reasoning and chill logic for cooling hot young blood—but it was neither reason nor logic which prevailed, I think, but something—I know not what—something inborn that conquered spite of myself, and a guilty and rebellious heart that, after all, had only asked for love, at any price—only love, but *all* of it, its sweetness unbridled, its mystery unfathomed—lest the body die, and the soul, unsatisfied, wing upward to eternal ignorance.

As I crouched there beside her, in the darkness below the tall hall-clock fell a-striking; and she moved, sighed, and sat up—languid-eyed and pink from slumber.

"Carus," she murmured, "how long have I slept? How long have you been here, my darling? Heigho! Why did you wake me? I was in paradise with you but now. Where are you? I am minded to drowse, and go find you in paradise again."

She pushed her hair aside and turned, resting her

chin on one hand, regarding me with sweet, sleepy, humorous eyes that glimmered like amethysts in the moonlight.

"Were ever two lovers so happy?" she asked. "Is there anything on earth that we lack?—possessing each other so completely. Tell me, Carus."

"Nothing," I said.

"Nothing," she echoed, leaning toward me and resting in my arms for a moment, then laid her hands on my shoulders, and, raising herself to a sitting posture, fell a-laughing to herself.

"While you were gone this afternoon," she said, "and I was lying here, eyes wide open, seeming to feel the bed sway like the ship, I fell to counting the ticking of the stair-clock below, and thinking how each second was recording the eternity of my love for you. And as I lay a-listening and thinking, came one by the window singing 'John O'Bail', and I heard voices in the tap-room and the clatter of pewter flagons. On a settle outside the tap-room window, full in the sun, sat the songster and his companions, drinking new ale and singing 'John O'Bail'—a song I never chanced to hear before, and I shall not soon forget it for lack of schooling"—and she sang softly, sitting there, clasping her knees, and swaying with the quaint rhythm:

"'Where do you wend your way, John O'Bail,
Where do you wend your way?'
'I follow the spotted trail
Till a maiden bids me stay.'
'Beware of the trail, John O'Bail,
Beware of the trail, I say!'

"Thus it runs, Carus, the legend of this John O'Bail, how he sought the wilderness, shunning his kind, and traveled and trapped and slew the deer, until one day at sunrise a maid of the People of the Morning hailed him, bidding him stay:

"'Turn to the fire of dawn, John O'Bail,
Turn to the fire of dawn;
The doe that waits in the vale
Was a fawn in the year that's gone!'
And John O'Bail he heeds the hail
And follows her on and on.

"Oh, Carus, they sang it and sang it, hammering their pewters together, and roaring the chorus, and that last dreadful verse:

"'Where is the soul of you, John O'Bail,
Where is the soul you slew?
There's Painted Death on the trail,
And the moccasins point to you.
Shame on the name of John O'Bail—'"

She hesitated, peering through the shadows at me: "Who *was* John O'Bail, Carus? What is the Painted Death, and who are the People of the Morning?"

"John O'Bail was a wandering fellow who went a-gipsying into the Delaware country. The Delawares call themselves 'People of the Morning.' This John O'Bail had a son by an Indian girl—and that's what they made the ballad about, because this son is that mongrel demon, Cornplanter, and he's struck the frontier like a catamount gone raving mad. He is the 'Painted Death.'"

"Oh," she said thoughtfully, "so that is why they curse the name of John O'Bail."

After a moment she went on again: "Well, you'll never guess who it was singing away down there! I crept to my windows and peeped out, and there, Carus, were those two queer forest-running fellows who stopped us on the hill that morning——"

"Jack Mount!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, dear, and the other—the little wrinkled fellow, who had such strangely fine manners for a Coureur-de-Bois——"

"The Weasel!"

"Yes, Carus, but very drunk, and boisterous, and cutting most amazing capers. They went off, finally, arm in arm, shuffling, reeling, and anon breaking into a solemn sort of dance; and everybody gave them wide berth on the street, and people paused to look after them, marking them with sour visages and wagging heads—" She stopped short, finger on lips, listening.

Far up the street I heard laughter, then a plaintive, sustained howling, then more laughter, drawing nearer and nearer.

Elsin nodded in silence. I sprang up and descended the stairs. The tap-room was lighted with candles, and the sober burghers who sat within, savoring the early ale, scarce noted my entrance, so intent were they listening to the approaching tumult.

The peculiar howling had recommenced. Stepping to the open door I looked out, and beheld a half-dozen forest-runners, in all the glory of deep-fringed buckskin and bright wampum, slowly hopping round and

round in a circle, the center of which was occupied by an angry town watchman, lanthorn lighted, pike in hand. As they hopped, lifting their moccasined feet as majestically as turkeys walking in a muddy road, fetching a yelp at every step, I perceived in their grotesque evolutions a parody upon a Wyandotte scalp-dance, the while they yapped and yowled, chanting:

"Ha-wa-sa-say
Ha! Ha!
Ha-wa-sa-say!"

"Dance, watchman, dance!" shouted one of the rangers, whom I knew to be Jack Mount, poking the enraged officer in the short ribs with the muzzle of his rifle; and the watchman, with a snarl, picked up his feet and began to tread a reluctant measure, calling out that he did not desire to dance, and that they were great villains and rogues and should pay for it yet.

I saw some shopkeepers putting up the shutters before their lighted windows, while the townspeople stood about in groups, agape, to see such doings in the public streets.

"Silence!" shouted Mount, raising his hand. "People of Albany, we have shown you the famous Wyandotte dance; we will now exhibit a dancing bear! Houp! Houp! Weasel, take thy tin cup and collect shillings! Ow! Ow!" And he dropped his great paws so that they dangled at the wrist, laid his head on one side, and began sidling around in a circle with the grave, measured tread of a bear, while the Weasel, drinking-cup in hand, industriously trotted in and out among the groups of

scandalized burghers, thrusting the tin receptacle at them, and talking all the while: "Something for the bear, gentlemen—a trifle, if you please. Everybody is permitted to contribute—you, sir, with your bones so nicely wadded over with fat—a shilling from you. What? How dare you refuse? Stop him, Tim!"

A huge ranger strode after the amazed burgher, blocking his way; the thrifty had taken alarm, but the rangers herded them back with persuasive playfulness, while the little Weasel made the rounds, talking cheerfully all the time, and Mount, great fists dangling, minced round and round, with a huge simper on his countenance, as though shyly aware of his own grace.

"Tim Murphy should go into the shops," he called out. "There are a dozen fat Dutchmen a-peeking through the shutters at me, and I dance before no man for less than a shilling. Houp! Houp! How much is in thy cup, Cade? Lord, what a thirst is mine! Yet I dance—villains, do you mark me? Oh, Cade, yonder pretty maid who laughs and shows her teeth is welcome to the show and naught to pay—unless she likes. Tim, I can dance no more! Elerson, bring the watchman!"

The Weasel trotted up, rattling the coins so unwillingly contributed by the economical; the runner addressed as Elerson tucked his arm affectionately into the arm of the distracted watchman and strolled up, followed by Tim Murphy, the most redoubtably notorious shot in North America.

Laughing, disputing, shouting, they came surging toward the Half-Moon Tavern, dragging the watchman, on whom they lavished many endearments. The

crowd parted with alacrity as Mount, thumbs in his armpits, silver-moleskin cap pushed back on his clustering curls, swaggered ahead, bowing right and left as though an applauding throng heralded the progress of an emperor and his suite.

Here and there a woman laughed at the handsome, graceless fellows; here and there a burgher managed to pull a grin, spite of the toll exacted.

"Now that our means permit us, we are going to drink your healths, good people," said Mount affably, shaking the tin cup; "and the health of that pretty maid who showed her teeth at me. Ladies of Albany, if you but knew the wealth of harmless frolic caged in the heart that beats beneath a humble rifle-frock! Eh, Tim? Off with thy coonskin, and sweep the populace with thy courtly bow!"

Murphy lifted his coonskin cap, flourishing it till the ringed fur-tail became a blur. Elerson, in a spasm of courtesy, removed the watchman's tricorn as well as his own; the little Weasel backed off, bowing step by step, until he backed past me into the tap-room, followed by the buckskinned crew.

"Now, watchman, have at thee!" roared Mount, as the sloppy pewters were brought.

And the watchman, resigned, pulled away at his mug, furtive eyes on the landlord, who, with true delicacy, looked the other way. At that moment Mount espied me and rose, pewter in hand, with a shout that brought all to their feet.

"Death to the Iroquois!" he thundered, "and a health to Captain Renault of the Rangers!"

Every eye was on me; the pewters were lifted, reversed, and emptied. The next instant I was in the midst of a trampling, buckskinned mob; they put me up on their shoulders and marched around the tap-room, singing "Morgan's Men"; they set me on their table amid the pools of spilled ale, and, joining hands, danced round and round, singing "The New Yorker" and "John O'Bail," until more ale was fetched and a cup handed up to me.

"Silence! The Captain speaks!" cried Mount.

"Captain?" said I, laughing. "I am no officer."

There was a mighty roar of laughter, amid which I caught cries of "He doesn't know." "Where's the 'Gazette'?" "Show him the 'Gazette'!"

The stolid landlord picked up a newspaper from a table, spread it deliberately, drew his horn spectacles from his pocket, wiped them, adjusted them, and read aloud a notice of my commission from Governor Clinton to be a senior captain in the Tryon County Rangers. Utterly unprepared, dumb with astonishment, I stared at him through the swelling din. Somebody thrust the paper at me. I read the item, mug in one hand, paper in t'other.

"Death to the Iroquois!" they yelled. "Hurrah for Captain Renault!"

"Silence!" bawled Mount. "Listen to the Captain!"

"Rangers of Tryon," I said, hesitating, "this great honor which our Governor has done me is incomprehensible to me. What experience have I to lead such veterans?—men of Morgan's, men of Hand's, men of

Saratoga, of Oriska, of Stillwater?—I who have never laid rifle in anger—I who have never seen a man die by violence?"

The hush was absolute.

"It must be," said I, "that such service as I have had the honor to render has made me worthy, else this commission had been an affront to the Rangers of Tryon County. And so, my brothers, that I may not shame you, I ask two things: obedience to orders; respect for my rank; and if you render not respect to my character, that will be my fault, not your own."

I raised my pewter: "The sentiment I give you is: 'The Rangers! My honor in their hands; theirs in mine!' Pewters aloft! Drink!"

Then the storm broke loose; they surged about the table, cheering, shaking their rifles and pewters above their heads, crying out for me to have no fear, that they would aid me, that they would be obedient and good—a mob of uproarious, overgrown children, swayed by sentiment entirely. And I even saw the watchman, maudlin already, dancing all by himself in a corner, and waving pike and lanthorn in martial fervor.

"Lads," I said, raising my hand for silence, "there is ale here for the asking, and nothing to pay. But we leave at daybreak for Butlersbury."

There was a dead silence.

"That is all," I said, smiling; and, laying my hand on the table, leaped lightly to the floor.

"Are we to drink no more?" asked Jack Mount, coming up, with round blue eyes widening.

"I did not say so. I said that we march at day-

break. You veterans of the pewter know best how much ale to carry with you to bed. All I require are some dozen steady legs in the morning."

A roar of laughter broke out.

"You may trust us, Captain! Good night, Captain! A health to you, sir! We will remember!"

Instead of returning to my chamber to secure a few hours' rest, I went out into the dimly lighted street, and, striking a smart pace, arrived in a few moments at the house of my old friend, Peter Van Schaick, now Colonel in command of the garrison. The house was pitch-dark, and it was only after repeated rapping that the racket of the big bronze knocker aroused an ancient negro servant, who poked his woolly pate from the barred side-lights and informed me, in a quavering voice, that Colonel Van Schaick was not at home, refusing all further information concerning him.

"Joshua! Joshua!" I said gently; "don't you know me?"

There was a silence, then a trembling: "Mars' Renault, suh, is dat you?"

"It is I, Joshua, back again after four years. Tell me where I may find your master?"

"Mars' Carus, suh, de Kunnel done gone to de Foht, suh—Foht Orange on de hill."

The old slave used the ancient name of the fort, but I understood.

"Does anybody live here now except the Colonel, Joshua?"

"No, suh, nobody 'cep' de Kunnel—'scusin' me, Mars' Carus."

"Joshua," I said, under my breath, "you know all the gossip of the country. Tell me, do you remember a young gentleman who used to come here before the war—a handsome, dark-eyed gentleman—Lieutenant Walter N. Butler?"

There was an interval of silence.

"Wuz de ossifer a-sparkin' de young misses at Gin'ral Schuyler's?"

"Yes, Joshua."

"A-co'tin' Miss Betty, suh?"

"Yes, yes. Colonel Hamilton married her. That is the man, Joshua. Tell me, did you ever hear of Mr. Butler's marriage in Butlersbury?"

A longer silence, then: "No, suh. Hit wuz de talk ob de town dat Suh John Johnsing done tuk Miss Polly Watts foh his lady-wife, an' all de time po'l'l Miss Claire wuz a-settin' in Foht Johnsing, dess a-cryin' her eyes out. But Mars' Butler he done tuk an' run off 'long o' dat half-caste lady de ossifers call Carolyn Montour——"

"What!"

"Yaas, suh. Dat de way Mars' Butler done carry on, suh. He done skedaddle 'long o' M'ss Carolyn. Hit wuz a Mohawk weddin', Mars' Carus."

"He never married her?"

"Mars' Butler he ain' gwine ma'hy nobody ef he ain' 'bleeged, suh. He dess lak all de young gentry, suh—'scusin' you'se'f, Mars' Carus."

I nodded in grim silence. After a moment I asked him to open the door for me, but he shook his aged head, saying: "Ef a ossifer done tell you what de

Kunnel done tell me, what you gwine do, Mars' Carus, suh?"

"Obey," I said briefly. "You're a good servant, Joshua. When Colonel Van Schaick returns, say to him that Captain Renault of the Rangers marches to Butlersbury at sunup, and that if Colonel Van Schaick can spare six bat-horses and an army transport-wagon, to be at the Half-Moon at dawn, Captain Renault will be vastly obliged to him, and will certainly render a strict accounting to the proper authorities."

Then I turned, descended the brick stoop, and walked slowly back to my quarters, a prey to apprehension and bitter melancholy. For if it were true that Walter Butler had done this thing, the law of the land was on his side; and if the war ended with him still alive, the courts must sustain him in this monstrous claim on Elsin Grey. Thought halted. Was it possible that Walter Butler had dared invade the tiger-brood of Catrine Montour to satisfy his unslaked lust?

Was it possible that he dared affront the she-demon of Catherinestown by ignoring an alliance with her fiercely beautiful child?—an alliance that Catrine Montour must have considered legal and binding, however irregular it might appear to jurists.

I was astounded. Where passion led this libertine, nothing barred his way—neither fear nor pity. And he had even dared to reckon with this frightful hag, Catrine Montour—this devil's spawn of Frontenac—and her tawny offspring.

I had seen the girl, Carolyn, at Guy Park—a splendid young animal, of sixteen then, darkly beautiful, wild

as a forest-cat. No wonder the beast in him had bristled at view of her; no wonder the fierce passion in her had leaped responsive to his forest courtship. By heaven, a proper mating in the shaggy hills of Danascara! Yes, but when the male beast emerges, yellow eyes fixed on the dead line that should bar him from the haunts of men, then, *then* it is time that a man shall arise and stand against him—stand for honor and right and light, and drive him back to the darkness of his lair again, or slay him at the sunlit gates of that civilization he dared to challenge.

CHAPTER X

SERMONS IN STONES

By sunup we had left the city on the three hills, Elsin, Colonel Van Schaick, and I, riding our horses at the head of the little column, followed by an escort of Rangers. Behind the Rangers plodded the laden bat-horses, behind them creaked an army transport-wagon, loaded with provisions and ammunition, drawn by two more horses, and the rear was covered by another squad of buckskinned riflemen, treading lightly in double file.

Nobody had failed me. My reckless, ale-swilling Rangers had kept the tryst with swollen eyes but steady legs; a string of bat-horses stood at the door of the Half-Moon when Elsin and I descended; and a moment later the army wagon came jolting and bumping down the hilly street, followed by Colonel Van Schaick and a dozen dragoons.

When he saw me he did not recognize me, so broad and tall had I become in these four years. Besides, I wore my forest-dress of heavily fringed doeskin, and carried the rifle given me by Colonel Hamilton.

"Hallo, Peter!" I called out, laughing.

"*You!* Can that be you, Carus!" he cried, spurring up to me where I sat my horse, and seizing me by

both caped shoulders. "Lord! Look at the lad! Six feet, or I'm a Mohawk!—six feet in his moccasins, and his hair sheered close and his cap o' one side, like any forest-swaggering free-rifle! Carus! Carus! Damme, if I'll call you Captain! Didn't you greet me but now with your impudent 'Hallo, Peter!'? Didn't you, you undisciplined rogue? By gad, you've kept your promise for a heart-breaker, you curly-headed, brown-eyed forest dandy!"

He gave me a hug and a hearty shake, so that the thrums tossed, and my little round cap of doeskin flew from my head. I clutched it ere it fell, and keeping it in my hand, presented him to Elsin.

"We are affianced, Peter," I said quietly. "Colonel Willett must play guardian until this fright in Albany subsides."

"Oh, the luck o' that man Willett!" he exclaimed, beaming on Elsin, and saluting the hand she stretched out. "Why do you not choose a man like me, madam? Heaven knows, such a reward is all I ask of my country's gratitude! And you are going to marry this fellow Carus? Is this what sinners such as he may look for? Gad, madam, I'm done with decency, and shall rig me in fringed shirt and go whipping through the woods, if such maidens as you find that attractive!"

"I find you exceedingly attractive, Colonel Van Schaick," she said, laughing—"so attractive that I ask your protection against this man who desires to be rid of me at any cost."

Van Schaick swore that I was a villain, and offered to run off with her at the drop of her 'kerchief, but

when I spoke seriously of the danger at Albany, he sobered quickly enough, and we rode to the head of the little column, now ready to move.

"March," I said briefly; and we started.

"I'll ride a little way with you," said the Colonel—"far enough to say that when Joshua gave me your message on my return last night I sent my orderly to find the wagon and animals and provision for three days' march. You can make it in two if you like, or even in twenty-four hours."

I thanked him and asked about the rumors which had so alarmed the people in Albany; but he shook his head, saying he knew nothing except that there were scalping parties out, and that he for one believed them to be the advance of an invading force from Canada.

"You ask me where this sweet lady will be safest," he continued, "and I answer that only God knows. Were I you, Carus, I should rather have her near me; so if your duty takes you to Johnstown it may be best that she remain with you until these rumors become definite. Then, it might be well that she return to Albany and stay with friends like the Schuylers, or the Van Rensselaers, or Colonel Hamilton's lady, if these worthy folk deem it safe to remain."

"Have they gone?" I asked.

"They're preparing to go," he said gloomily. "Oh, Carus, when we had Walter Butler safe in Albany jail in '78, why did we not hang him? He was taken as a spy, tried, and properly condemned. I remember well how he pretended illness, and how that tender-hearted young Marquis Lafayette was touched by his

plight, and begged that he be sent to hospital in the comfortable house of some citizen. Ah, had we known what that human tiger was meditating! Think of it, Carus! You knew him, did you not, when he came a-courting Margaret Schuyler? Lord! who could believe that Walter Butler would so soon be smeared with the blood of women and children? Who could believe that this young man would so soon be damned with the guilt of Cherry Valley?"

We rode on in silence. I dared not glance at Elsin; I found no pretext to stop Van Schaick; and, still in perfect silence, we wheeled northwest into the Schenectady road, where Peter took leave of us in his own simple, hearty fashion, and wheeled about, galloping back up the slope, followed by his jingling dragoons.

I turned to take my last look at the three hills and the quaint Dutch city. Far away on the ramparts of the fort I saw our beloved flag fluttering, a gay spot in the sunshine, with its azure, rose, and silvery tints blending into the fresh colors of early morning. I saw, too, the ruined fort across the river, where that British surgeon, Dr. Stackpole, composed the immortal tune of "Yankee Doodle" to deride us—that same tune to which my Lord Cornwallis was now dancing, while we whistled it from West Point to Virginia.

As I sat my saddle there, gazing at the city I had thought so wonderful when I was a lad fresh from Broadalbin Bush, I seemed once more to wander with my comrades, Stephen Van Rensselaer, Steve Watts, and Jack Johnson—now Sir John—a-fishing troutlings from the Norman's Kill, that ripples through the lovely

vale of Tawasentha. Once more I seemed to see the patroon's great manor-house through the drooping foliage of the park elms, and the stately mansion of our dear General Schuyler, with its two tall chimneys, its dormers, roof-rail, and long avenue of trees; and on the lawn I seemed to see pretty little Margaret, now grown to womanhood and affianced to the patroon; and Betty Schuyler, who scarce a year since wedded my handsome Colonel Hamilton—that same lively Betty who so soon sent Walter Butler about his business, though his veins were like to burst with pride o' the blood in them, that he declared came straight from the Earls of Arran and the great Dukes of Ormond and of Ossery.

"Of what are you thinking?" asked Elsin softly.

"Of my boyhood, dearest. Yonder is the first city I ever beheld. Shall I tell you of it—and of that shy country lad who came hither to learn something of deportment, so that he might venture to enter an assembly and forget his hands and feet?"

"Were *you* ever awkward, Carus?"

"Awkward as a hound-pup learning to walk."

"I shall never believe it," she declared, laughing; and we moved forward on the Schenectady road, Murphy, Mount, Elerson, and the little Weasel trotting faithfully at heel, and the brown column trailing away in their dustless wake.

I had not yet forgotten the thrill of her quick embrace when, as we met at the breakfast-table by candlelight, I had told her of my commission and of our Governor's kindness. And just to see the flush of pride

in her face, I spoke of it again; and her sweet eyes' quick response was the most wonderful to me of all the fortune that had fallen to my lot. I turned proudly in my saddle, looking back upon the people now entrusted to me—and as I looked, pride changed to apprehension, and a quick prayer rose in my heart that I, a servant of my country, might not prove unequal to the task set me.

Sobered, humbled, I rode on, asking in silence God's charity for my ignorance, and His protection for her I loved, and for these human souls entrusted to my care in the dark hours of the approaching trial.

North and northwest we traveled on a fair road, which ran through pleasant farming lands, stretches of woods, meadows, and stubble-fields. At first we saw men at work in the fields, not many, but every now and again some slow Dutch yokel, with his sunburned face turned from his labor to watch us pass. But the few farmhouses became fewer, and these last were deserted. Finally no more houses appeared, and stump-lots changed to tangled clearings, and these into second growth, and these at last into the primeval forests, darkly magnificent, through which our road, now but a lumber road, ran moist and dark, springy and deep with the immemorial droppings of the trees.

Without command of mine, four lithe riflemen had trotted off ahead. I now ordered four more to act on either flank, and called up part of the rear-guard to string out in double file on either side of the animals and wagon. The careless conversation in the ranks, the sudden laugh, the clumsy skylarking all ceased. To-

bacco-pipes were emptied and pouched, flints and pans scrutinized, straps and bandoleers tightened, moccasins relaced. The batmen examined ropes, wagon-wheels, and harness, and I saw them furtively feeling for their hatchets to see that everything was in place.

Thankful that I had a company of veterans and no mob of godless and silly trappers, bawling contempt of everything Indian, I unconsciously began to read the signs of the forest, relapsing easily into that cautious custom which four years' disuse had nothing rusted.

And never had man so perfect a companion in such exquisite accord with his every mood and thought as I had in Elsin Grey. Her sweet, reasonable mind was quick to comprehend. When I fell silent, using my ears with all the concentration of my other senses, she listened, too, nor broke the spell by glance or word. Yet, soon as I spoke in low tones, her soft replies were ready, and when my ever restless eyes reverted, resting a moment on her, her eyes met mine with that perfect confidence that pure souls give.

At noon we halted to rest the horses and eat, the pickets going out of their own accord. And I did not think it fit to give orders where none were required in this company of Irregulars, whose discipline matched regiments more pretentious, and whose alignment was suited to the conditions. Braddock and Bunker Hill were lessons I had learned to regard as vastly more important than our good Baron's drill-book.

As I sat eating a bit of bread, cup of water in the other hand, Jack Mount came swaggering up with that

delightful mixture of respect and familiarity which brings the hand to the cap but leaves a grin on the face.

"Well, Jack?" I asked, smiling.

"Have you noticed any sign, sir?" he inquired. Secretly self-satisfied, he was about to go on and inform me that he and Tim Murphy had noticed a stone standing against a tree—for I saw them stop like pointers on a hot grouse-scent just as we halted to dismount. I was unwilling to forestall him or take away one jot of the satisfaction, so I said: "What have you seen?"

Then he beamed all over and told me; and the Weasel and Tim Murphy came up to corroborate him, all eagerly pointing out the stone to me where it rested against the base of a black ash.

"Well," said I, smiling, "how do you interpret that sign?"

"Iroquois!" said the rangers promptly.

"Yes, but are they friendly or hostile?"

The question seemed to them absurd, but they answered very civilly that it was a signal of some sort which could only be interpreted by Indians, and that they had no doubt that it meant some sort of mischief to us.

"Men," I said quietly, "you are wrong. That stone leaning upon a tree is a friendly message to me from a body of our Oneida scouts."

They stared incredulously.

"I will prove it," said I. "Jack, go you to that stone. On the under side you will find a number of white marks made with paint. I can not tell you how

many, but the number will indicate the number of Oneidas who are scouting for us ahead."

Utterly unconvinced, yet politely obedient, the blond giant strode off across the road, picked up the great stone as though it were a pompion, turned it over, uttered an exclamation, and bore it back to us.

"You see," I said, "twenty Oneida scouts will join us about two o'clock this afternoon if we travel at the same rate that we are traveling. This white circle traced here represents the sun; the straight line the meridian. Calculating roughly, I should set the time of meeting at two o'clock. Now, Jack, take the stone to the stream yonder and scrub off the paint with moss and gun-oil, then drop the stone into the water. And you, Tim Murphy, go quietly among the men and caution them not to fire on a friendly Oneida. That is all, lads. We march in a few moments."

The effect upon the rangers was amusing; their kindly airs of good-natured protection vanished; Mount gazed wildly at me; Tim Murphy, perfectly convinced yet unable to utter a word, saluted and marched off, while Elerson and the Weasel stood open-mouthed, fingering their rifles until the men began to fall in silently, and I put up Elsin and mounted my roan, motioning Murphy and Jack Mount to my stirrups.

"Small wonder I read such signs," I said. "I am an Oneida chief, an ensign, and a sachem. Come freely to me when signs of the Iroquois puzzle you. It would not have been very wise to open fire on our own scouts."

It seemed strange to them—it seemed strange to me—that I should be instructing the two most accomplished

foresters in America. Yet it is ever the old story; all else they could read that sky and earth, land and water, tree and rock held imprinted for savant eyes, but they could not read the simple signs and symbols by which the painted men of the woods conversed with one another. Pride, contempt for the savage—these two weaknesses stood in their way. And no doubt, now, they consoled themselves with the thought that a dead Iroquois, friendly or otherwise, was no very great calamity. This was a danger, but I did not choose to make it worse by harping on it.

About two o'clock a ranger of the advanced guard came running back to say that some two score Iroquois, stripped and painted for war, were making signs of amity from the edge of the forest in front of us.

I heard Mount grunt and Murphy swearing softly under his breath as I rode forward, with a nod to Elsin.

"Now you will see some friends of my boyhood," I said gaily, unlacing the front of my hunting-shirt as I rode, and laying it open to the wind.

'Carus!" she exclaimed, "what is that blue mark on your breast?"

"Only a wolf," I said, laughing. "Now you shall see how we Oneidas meet and greet after many years! Look, Elsin! See that Indian standing there with his gun laid on his blanket? The three rangers have taken to cover. There they stand, watching that Oneida like three tree-cats."

As I cantered up and drew bridle Elerson called out that there were twenty savages in the thicket ahead, and to be certain that I was not mistaken.

The tall Oneida looked calmly up at me; his glittering eyes fell upon my naked breast, and, as he looked, his dark face lighted, and he stretched out both hands.

"Onehda!" he ejaculated.

I leaned from my saddle, holding his powerful hands in a close clasp.

"Little Otter! Is it you, my younger brother? Is it really you?" I repeated again and again, while his brilliant eyes seemed to devour my face, and his sinewy grip tightened spasmodically.

"What happiness, Onehda!" he said, in his softly sonorous Oneida dialect. "What happiness for the young men—and the sachems—and the women and children, too, Onehda. It is well that you return to us—to the few of us who are left. Koue!"

And now the Oneidas were coming out of the willows, crowding up around my horse, and I heard everywhere my name pronounced, and everywhere outstretched hands sought mine, and painted faces were lifted to mine—even the blackened visage of the war-party's executioner relaxing into the merriest of smiles.

"Onehda," he said, "do you remember that feast when you were raised up?"

"Does an Oneida and a Wolf forget?" I said, smiling.

An emphatic "No!" broke from the painted throng about me.

Elsin, sitting her saddle at a little distance, watched us wide-eyed.

"Brothers," I said quietly, "a new rose has budded in Tryon County. The Oneidas will guard it for the

honor of their nation, lest the northern frost come stealing south to blight the blossom."

Two score dark eyes flashed on Elsin. She started; then a smile broke out on her flushed face as a painted warrior stalked solemnly forward, bent like a king, and lifted the hem of her foot-mantle to his lips. One by one the Oneidas followed, performing the proud homage in silence, then stepping back to stand with folded arms as the head of the column appeared at the bend of the road.

I called Little Otter to me, questioning him; and he said that as far as they had gone there were no signs of Mohawk or Cayuga, but that the bush beyond should be traversed with caution. So I called in the flanking rangers, replacing them with Oneidas, and, sending the balance of the band forward on a trot, waited five minutes, then started on with a solid phalanx of riflemen behind to guard the rear.

As we rode, Elsin and I talking in low tones, mile after mile slipped away through the dim forest trail, and nothing to alarm us that I noted, save once when I saw another stone set upon a stone; but I knew my Oneidas had also seen and examined it, and it had not alarmed them sufficiently to send a warrior back to me.

It was an Oneida symbol; but, of course, my scouts had not set it up. Therefore it must have been placed there by an enemy, but for what purpose except to arrest the attention of an Oneida and prepare him for later signals, I could not yet determine. Mount had seen it, and spoken of it, but I shook my head, bidding him keep his eyes sharpened for further signs.

Signs came sooner than I expected. We passed stone after stone set on end, all emphasizing the desire of somebody to arrest the attention of an Oneida. Could it be I? A vague premonition had scarcely taken shape in my mind when, at a turn in the road, I came upon three of my Oneida scouts standing in the center of the road. The seven others must have gone on, for I saw nothing of them. The next moment I caught sight of something that instantly riveted and absorbed my attention.

From a huge pine towering ahead of us, and a little to the right, a great square of bark had been carefully removed about four feet from the ground. On this fresh white scar were painted three significant symbols —the first a red oblong, about eighteen inches by four, on which were designed two human figures, representing Indians, holding hands. Below that, drawn in dark blue, were a pair of stag's antlers, of five prongs; below the antlers—a long way below—was depicted in black a perfectly recognizable outline of a timber-wolf.

I rode up to the tree and examined the work. The paint was still soft and fresh on the raw wood. Flies swarmed about it. I looked at Little Otter, making a sign, and his scarcely perceptible nod told me that I had read the message aright.

The message was for me, personally and exclusively; and the red man who had traced it there not an hour since was an Iroquois, either Canienga, Onondaga, Cayuga, or Seneca—I know not which. Roughly, the translation of the message was this: The Wolf meant me because about it were traced the antlers, symbol of chief-

tainship, and below, on the ground, the symbol of the Oneida Nation, a long, narrow stone, upright, embedded in the moss. The red oblong smear represented a red-wampum belt; the figures on it indicated that, although the belt was red, meaning war, the clasped hands modified the menace, so that I read the entire sign as follows:

"An Iroquois desires to see you in order to converse upon a subject concerning wars and treaties."

"Turn over that stone, Little Otter," I said.

"I have already done so," he replied quietly.

"At what hour does this embassy desire to see me?"

He held up four fingers in silence.

"Is this Canienga work?"

"Mohawk!" he said bitterly.

The two terms were synonymous, yet mine was respectful, his a contemptuous insult to the Canienga Nation. No Indian uses the term Mohawk in speaking to or of a Mohawk unless they mean an insult. Canienga is the proper term.

"Is it safe for me to linger here while all go forward?" I asked Little Otter, lowering my voice so that none except he could hear me.

He smiled and pointed at the tree. The tree was enormous, a giant pine, dwarfing the tallest tree within range of my vision from where I sat my horse. I understood. The choice of this great tree for the inscription was no accident; it now symbolized the sacred tree of the Six Nations—the tree of heaven. Beneath it any Iroquois was as safe as though he stood at the eternal council-fire at Onondaga in the presence of the

sachems of the Long House. But why had this unseen embassy refused to trust himself to this sanctuary? Because of the rangers, to whom no redskin is sacred.

"Jack Mount," I said, "take command and march your men forward half a mile. Then halt and await me."

He obeyed without a word. Elsin hesitated, gave me one anxious, backward glance, but my smile seemed to reassure her, and she walked her black mare forward. Past me marched the little column. I watched it drawing away northward, until a turn in the forest road hid the wagon and the brown-clad rear-guard. Then I dismounted and sat down, my back to the giant pine, my rifle across my knees, to wait for the red ambassador whom I knew would come.

Minute after minute slipped away. So still it grew that the shy forest creatures came back to this forest runway, made by dreaded man; and because it is the work of a creature they dread and suspect, their curiosity ever draws them to man-made roads. A cock-grouse first stepped out of the thicket, crest erect, ruff spread; then a hare loped by, halting to sniff in the herbage. I watched them for a long while, listening intently. Suddenly the partridge wheeled, crest flattened, and ran into the thicket, like a great rat; the hare sat erect, flanks palpitating, then leaped twice, and was gone as shadows go.

I saw the roadside bushes stir, part, and, as I rose, an Indian leaped lightly into the road and strode straight toward me. He was curiously painted with green and orange, and he was stark naked, except that

he wore ankle-moccasins, clout, and a fringed pouch, like a quiver, covered with scarlet beads in zigzag pattern.

He did not seem to notice that I was armed, for he carried his own rifle most carelessly in the hollow of his left arm, and when he had halted before me he coolly laid the weapon across his moccasins.

The dignified silence that always precedes a formal meeting of strange Iroquois was broken at length by a low, guttural exclamation as his narrow-slitted eyes fell upon the tattoo on my bared breast: "Salute, Roy-a-neh!"

"Welcome, O Keeper of the Gate," I said calmly.

"Does my younger brother know to which gate-warden he speaks?" asked the savage warily.

"When a Wolf barks, the Eastern Gate-Keepers of the Long House listen," I replied. "It was so in the beginning. What has my elder brother of the Canienga to say to me?"

His cunning glance changed instantly to an absolutely expressionless mask. My white skin no longer made any difference to him. We were now two Iroquois.

"It is the truth," he said. "This is the message sent to my younger brother, Onehda, chief ensign of the Wolf Clan of the Oneida nation. I am a belt-bearer. Witness the truth of what I say to you—by this belt. Now read the will of the Iroquois."

He drew from his beaded pouch a black and white belt of seven rows. I took it, and, holding it in both hands, gazed attentively into his face.

"The Three Wolves listen," I said briefly.

"Then listen, noble of the noble clan. The council-fire is covered at Onondaga; but it shall burn again at Thendara. This was so from the first, as all know. The council therefore summons their brother, Onehda, as ensign of his clan. The will of the council is the will of the confederacy. Hiro! I have spoken."

"Does a single coal from Onondaga still burn under the great tree, my elder brother?" I asked cautiously.

"The great tree is at Onondaga," he answered sullenly; "the fire is covered."

Which was as much as to say that there was no sanctuary guaranteed an Oneida, even at a federal council.

"Tell them," I said deliberately, "that a belt requires a belt; and, when the Wolves talk to the Oneidas, they at Thendara shall be answered. I have spoken."

"Do the Three Wolves take counsel with the Six Bears and Turtles?" he asked, with a crafty smile.

"The trapped wolf has no choice; his howls appeal to the wilderness entire," I replied emphatically.

"But—a trapped wolf never howls, my younger brother; a lone wolf in a pit is always silent."

I flushed, realizing that my metaphor had been at fault. Yet now there was to be nothing between this red ambassador and me except the subtlest and finest shades of metaphor.

"It is true that a trapped wolf never howls," I said; "because a pitted wolf is as good as a dead wolf, and a dead wolf's tongue hangs out sideways. But it is not so when the pack is trapped. Then the prisoners

may call upon the Wilderness for aid, lest a whole people suffer extermination."

"Will my younger brother take counsel with Oneidas?" he asked curiously.

"Surely as the rocks of Tryon point to the Dancers, naming the Oneida nation since the Great Peace began, so surely, my elder brother, shall Onehda talk to the three ensigns, brother to brother, clan to clan, lest we be utterly destroyed and the Oneida nation perish from the earth."

"My younger brother will not come to Thendara?" he inquired without emotion.

"Does a chief answer as squirrels answer one to another?—as crow replies to crow?" I asked sternly. "Go teach the Canienga how to listen and how to wait!"

His glowing eyes, fastened on mine, were lowered to the symbol on my breast, then his shaved head bent, and he folded his powerful arms.

"Onehda has spoken," he said respectfully. "Even a Delaware may claim his day of grace. My ears are open, O my younger brother."

"Then bear this message to the council: I accept the belt; my answer shall be the answer of the Oneida nation; and with my reply shall go three strings. Depart in peace, Bearer of Belts!"

Lightly, gracefully as a tree-lynx, he stooped and seized his rifle, wheeled, passed noiselessly across the road, turned, and buried himself in the tufted bushes. For an instant the green tops swayed, then not a ripple of the foliage, not a sound marked the swift course of

the naked belt-bearer through the uncharted sea of trees.

Mounting my roan, I wheeled him north at a slow walk, preoccupied, morose, sadly absorbed in this new order of things where an Oneida now must needs answer a Mohawk as an Iroquois should once have answered an Erie or an Algonquin. Alas for the great League! alas for the mighty dead! Hiawatha! Atotarho! Where were they? Where now was our own Odasete; and Kanyadario, and the mighty wisdom of Dekanawidah? The end of the Red League was already in sight; the Great Peace was broken; the downfall of the Confederacy was at hand.

At that northern tryst at Thendara, the nine sachems allotted to the Canienga, the fourteen sachems of the Onondaga, the eight Senecas, the Cayuga ten must look in vain for nine Oneidas. And without them the Great Peace breaks like a rotten arrow where the war-head drops and the feathers fall from the unbound nock.

Strange, strange, that I, a white man of blood untainted, must answer for this final tragic catastrophe! Without me, perhaps, the sachems of the three clans might submit to the will of the League, for even the surly Onondagas had now heeded the League-Call—yes, even the Tuscaroras, too. And as for those Delaware dogs, they had come, belly-dragging, cringing to the lash of the stricken Confederacy, though now was their one chance in a hundred years to disobey and defy. But the Lenape were ever women.

Strange, strange, that I, a white man of unmixed

blood, should stand in League-Council for the noblest clan of the Oneida nation!

That I had been adopted satisfied the hereditary law of chieftainship; that I had been selected satisfied the elective law of the sachems. Rank follows the female line; the son of a chief never succeeded to rank. It is the matron—the chief woman of the family—who chooses a dead chief's successor from the female line in descent; and thus Cloud on the Sun chose me, her adopted; and, dying, heard the loud, imperious challenge from the council-fire as the solemn rite ended with:

"*Now show me the man!*"

And so, knowing that the antlers were lifted and the quiver slung across my thigh, she died contented, and I, a lad, stood a chief of the Oneida nation. Never since time began, since the Caniengas adopted Hiawatha, had a white councilor been chosen who had been accepted by family, clan, and national council, and ratified by the federal senate, excepting only Sir William Johnson and myself. That Algonquin word "sachem," so seldom used, so difficult of pronunciation by the Iroquois, was never employed to designate a councilor in council; there they used the title, Roy-a-neh, and to that title had I answered the belt of the Iroquois, in the name of Kayanehenh-Kowa, the Great Peace.

For what Magna Charta is to the Englishman, what the Constitution is to us, is the Great Peace to an Iroquois; and their gratitude, their intense reverence and love for its founder, Hiawatha, is like no sentiment we have conceived even for the beloved name of Washington.

Now that the Revolution had split the Great Peace, which is the Iroquois League, the larger portion of the nation had followed Brant to Canada—all the Caniengas, the greater part of the Onondaga nation, all the Cayugas, the one hundred and fifty of our own Oneidas. And though the Senecas did not desert their western post as keepers of the shattered gate in a house divided against itself, they acted with the Mohawks; the Onondagas had brought their wampum from Onondaga, and a new council-fire was kindled in Canada as rallying-place of a great people in process of final disintegration.

It was sad to me who loved them, who knew them first as firm allies of New York province, who understood them, their true character, their history and tradition, their intimate social and family life.

And though I stood with those whom they struck heavily, and who in turn struck them hip and thigh, I bear witness before God that they were not by nature the fiends and demons our historians have painted, not by instinct the violent and ferocious scourges that the painted Tories made of these children of the forest, who for five hundred years had formed a confederacy whose sole object was peace.

I speak not of the brutal and degraded *gens de prairie*—the horse-riding savages of the West, whose primal instincts are to torture the helpless and to violate women—a crime no Iroquois, no Huron, no Algonquin, no Lenni-Lenape can be charged with. But I speak for the *gens de bois*—the forest Indians of the East, and of those who maintained the Great League,

which was but a powerful tribunal imposing peace upon half a continent.

Left alone to themselves, unharassed by men of my blood and color, they are a kindly and affectionate people, full of sympathy for their friends in distress, considerate of their women, tender to their children, generous to strangers, anxious for peace, and profoundly reverent where their League or its founders were concerned.

Centuries of warfare for self-preservation have made them efficient in the arts of war. Ferocity, craft, and deception, practised on them by French, Dutch, and English, have taught them to reply in kind. Yet these somber, engrafted qualities which we have recorded as their distinguishing traits, no more indicate their genuine character than war-paint and shaven head display the customary costume they appear in among their own people. The cruelties of war are not peculiar to any one people; and God knows that in all the Iroquois confederacy no savage could be found to match the British Provost, Cunningham, or Major Bromfield—no atrocities could obscure the atrocities in the prisons and prison-ships of New York, the deeds of the Butlers, of Crysler, of Beacraft, and of Bettys.

For, among the Iroquois, I can remember only two who were the peers in cruelty of Walter Butler and the Tory Beacraft, and these were the Indian called Seth Henry, and the half-breed hag, Catrine Montour.

Pondering on these things, perplexed and greatly depressed, I presently emerged from the forest-belt through which I had been riding, and found our little

column halted in the open country, within a few minutes march of the Schenectady highway.

The rangers looked up at me curiously as I passed, doubtless having an inkling of what had been going on from questioning the Oneida scouts, for Murphy broke out impulsively, "Sure, Captain, we was that onaisy, alanna, that Elerson an' me matched apple-pipps f'r to inthrojuce wan another to that powwow forninst the big pine."

"Had you appeared yonder while I was talking to that belt-bearer it might have gone hard with me, Tim," I said gravely.

Riding on past the spot where Jack Mount stood, his brief authority ended, I heard him grumbling about the rashness of officers and the market value of a good scalp in Quebec; and I only said: "Scold as much as you like, Jack, only obey." And so cantered forward to where Elsin sat her black mare, watching my approach. Her steady eyes welcomed, mine responded; in silence we wheeled our horses north once more, riding stirrup to stirrup through the dust. On either side stretched abandoned fields, growing up in weeds and thistles, for now we were almost on the Mohawk River, the great highway of the border war down which the tides of destruction and death had rolled for four terrible years.

There was nothing to show for it save meadows abandoned to willow scrub, fallow fields deep in milkweed, goldenrod, and asters; and here and there a charred rail or two of some gate or fence long since destroyed.

Far away across the sand-flats we could see a ruined barn outlined against the sunset sky, but no house remained standing to the westward far as the eye could reach. However, as we entered the highway, which I knew well, because now we were approaching a country familiar to me, I, leading, caught sight of a few Dutch roofs to the east, and presently came into plain view of the stockade and blockhouses of Schenectady, above which rose the lovely St. George's church and the heavy walls and four demi-bastions of the citadel which is called the Queen's Fort.

As we approached in full view of the ramparts there was a flash, a ball of white smoke; and no doubt a sentry had fired his musket, such was evidently their present state of alarm, for I saw the Stars and Stripes run up on the citadel, and, far away, I heard the conch-horn blowing, and the startled music of the light-infantry horns. Evidently the sight of our Oneidas, spread far forward in a semicircle, aroused distrust. I sent Murphy forward with a flag, then advanced very deliberately, recalling the Oneidas by whistle-signal.

And, as we rode under the red rays of the westering sun, I pointed out St. George's to Elsin and the Queen's Fort, and where were formerly the town gates by which the French and Indians had entered on that dreadful winter night when they burned Schenectady, leaving but four or five houses, and the snowy streets all wet and crimsoned with the blood of women and children.

"But that was many, many years ago, sweetheart," I added, already sorry that I had spoken of such things.

"It was in 1690 that Monsieur De Mantet and his Frenchmen and Praying Indians did this."

"But people do such things now, Carus," she said, serious eyes raised to mine.

"Oh, no——"

"They did at Wyoming, at Cherry Valley, at Minnisink. You told me so in New York—before you ever dreamed that you and I would be here together."

"Ah, Elsin, but things have changed now that Colonel Willett is in the Valley. His Excellency has sent here the one man capable of holding the frontier; and he will do it, dear, and there will be no more Cherry Valleys, no more Minnisinks, no more Wyomings now."

"Why were they moving out of the houses in Albany, Carus?"

I did not reply.

Presently up the road I saw Murphy wave his white flag; and, a moment later, the Orange Gate, which was built like a drawbridge, fell with a muffled report, raising a cloud of dust. Over it, presently, our horses' feet drummed hollow as we spurred forward.

"Pass, you Tryon County men!" shouted the sentinels; and the dusty column entered. We were in Schenectady at last.

As we wheeled up the main street of the town, marching in close column between double lines of anxious townsfolk, a staff-officer, wearing the uniform of the New York line, came clattering down the street from the Queen's Fort, and drew bridle in front of me with a sharp, precise salute.

"Captain Renault?" he asked.

I nodded, returning his salute.

"Colonel Gansvoort's compliments, and you are directed to report to Colonel Willett at Butlersbury without losing an hour."

"That means an all-night march," I said bluntly.

"Yes, sir." He lowered his voice: "The enemy are on the Sacandaga."

I stiffened in my stirrups. "Tell Colonel Gansvoort it shall be done, sir." And I wheeled my horse, raising my rifle: "Attention!—to the left—dress! Right about face! By sections of four—to the right—wheel—March! . . . Halt! Front—dress! Trail—arms! March!"

The veterans of Morgan, like trained troop-horses, had executed the maneuvers before they realized what was happening. They were the first formal orders I had given. I myself did not know how the orders might be obeyed until all was over and we were marching out of the Orange Gate once more, and swinging northward, wagons, bat-horses, and men in splendid alignment, and the Oneidas trotting ahead like a pack of foxhounds under master and whip. But I had to do with irregulars; I understood that. Already astonished and inquiring glances shot upward at me as I rode with Elsin; already I heard a low whispering among the men. But I waited. Then, as we turned the hill, a cannon on the Queen's Fort boomed good-by and Godspeed!—and our conch-horn sounded a long, melancholy farewell.

It was then that I halted the column, facing them, rifle resting across my saddle-bow.

"Men of New York," I said, "the enemy are on the Sacandaga."

Intense silence fell over the ranks.

"If there be one rifleman here who is too weary to enter Johnstown before daylight, let him fall out."

Not a man stirred.

"Very well," I said, laughing; "if you Tryon County men are so keen for battle, there's a dish o' glory to be served up, hot as sugar and soupaan, among the Mayfield hills. Come on, Men of New York!"

And I think they must have wondered there in Schenectady at the fierce cheering of Morgan's men as our column wheeled northwest once more, into the coming night.

We entered Johnstown an hour before dawn, not a man limping, nor a horse either, for that matter. An officer from Colonel Willett met us, directing the men and the baggage to the fort which was formerly the stone jail, the Oneidas to huts erected on the old camping-ground west of Johnson Hall, and Elsin and me to quarters at Jimmy Burke's Tavern. She was already half-asleep in her saddle, yet ever ready to rouse herself for a new effort; and now she raised her drowsy head with a confused smile as I lifted her from the horse to the porch of Burke's celebrated frontier inn.

"Colonel Willett's compliments, and he will breakfast with you at ten," whispered the young officer. "Good night, sir."

"Good night," I nodded, and entered the tavern, bearing Elsin in my arms, now fast asleep as a worn-out child.

CHAPTER XI

THE TEST

I WAS awakened by somebody shaking me. Bewildered, not recognizing my landlord, but confusing him with the sinister visions that had haunted my sleep, I grappled with him until, senses returning, I found myself sitting bolt upright in a shaky trundle-bed, clutching Jimmy Burke by the collar.

"Lave go m shirrt, sorr," he pleaded—"f'r the saints' sake, r Renault! I've the wan shirrt to me back——"

"Confound you, Jimmy!" I yawned, dropping back on my pillow; "what do you mean by choking me?"

"Chocken', is it, sorr!" exclaimed the indignant Irishman; "'tis me shcalp ye're afther liftin' wid a whoop an' a yell, glory be! I'll trouble ye, Captain Renault, f'r to projooce me wig, sorr!"

Clutched in my left hand I discovered the unfortunate landlord's wig, and I lay there amused and astonished while he haughtily adjusted it before the tiny triangle of glass nailed on the wall.

"Shame on you, Jimmy Burke, to wear a wig to cheat some honest Mohawk out of his eight dollars!" I yawned, rubbing my eyes.

"Mohawks, is it? Now, God be good to the haythen whin James Burrke takes the Currietown thrail——"

"You're exempt, you fat rascal!" I said, laughing; and the dumpy little Irishman gave me a sly grin as he retied his stock and stood smoothing down his rumpled wig before the glass.

"Och! divil a hair has he left on the wig o' me!" he grumbled. "Will ye get up, sorr? 'Tis ten o'clock, lackin' some contrairy minutes, an' the officers from the foort do be ragin' f'r lack o' soupaan——"

"Are they here?" I cried, leaping out of bed. "Why didn't you say so? Where's my tub of water? Don't stand there grinning, I tell you. Say to Colonel Willett I'll join him in a second."

The fat little landlord retreated crab-wise. I soused my clipped head in the tub, took a spatter-bath like a wild duck in a hurry, clothed me in my gay forest-dress, making no noise lest I wake Elsin, and ran down the rough wooden stairs to the coffee-room, plump into a crowd of strange officers, all blue and buff and gilt.

"Well, Carus!" came a cool, drawling voice from the company; and I saw the tall, gaunt figure of Colonel Marinus Willett sauntering toward me, his hawk's nose wrinkled into a whimsical smile.

"Colonel," I stammered, saluting, then sprang forward and grasped the veteran's outstretched hand, asking his pardon for my tardiness.

"What a great big boy!" he commented, holding my hand in both of his, and inspecting me from crown to heel. "Is this the lad I've heard of—below—" His nose wrinkled again, and his grimly humorous mouth twitched. "Carus, you've grown since I last saw you at the patroon's, romping a reel with those rosy Dutch

lassies from Vrooman's—eh? That's well, my son; the best dancers were ever the best fighters! Look at Tim Murphy! As for me, I never could learn to dance with you Valley aristocrats. Carus, you should know my officers." And he mentioned names with a kindly, informal precision characteristic of a gentleman too great to follow conventions, too highly bred to ignore them. The consequent compromise was, as I say, a delightfully formal informality which reigned among his entourage, but never included himself, although he apparently invited it. In this, I imagine, he resembled his Excellency, and have heard others say so; but I do not know, for I never saw his Excellency.

"Now, gentlemen," said Colonel Willett casually, as he seated himself at the head of the table. And we sat down at the signal, I next to the Colonel at his nod of invitation.

The fat little landlord, Burke, notorious for the speed with which he fled from Sir John Johnson when that warrior-baronet raided Johnstown, came bustling into the coffee-room like a fresh breeze from the Irish coast, asking our pleasure in a brogue thick enough to season the bubbling, steaming bowl of hasty-pudding he set before us a moment later.

"Jimmy," said an officer, glancing up at him where he stood, thick legs apart, hands clasped behind him, and jolly head laid on one side, "is there any news of Sir John Johnson in these parts?"

"Faith," said Burke, with a toss of his head, "'tis little I bother meself along wid the likes o' Sir John. Lave him poke his nose into the Sacandagy an' dhrown

there, bad cess to him! We've a thrick to match his, an' wan f'r the pig!"

"I'm glad to know that, Jimmy," said another officer earnestly. "And if that's the case, Captain Renault's Rangers might as well pack up and move back to Albany."

"Sure, Captain dear," he said, turning to me, "'tis not f'r the likes o' Jimmy Burke to say it, but there do be a fri'nd o' mine in the Rangers, a blatherin', blarneyin', bog-runnin' lad they call Tim Murphy. 'Tis f'r his sake I'd be glad to see the Rangers here—an' ye'll not misjudge me, sorr, that Jimmy Burke is afeared o' Sir John an' his red whippets!"

"Oh, no," I said gravely; "I'm quite ready to leave Johnstown to your protection, Jimmy, and march my men back to-night—with Colonel Willett's permission——"

"Sorra the day! Och, listen to him, Colonel dear!" exclaimed the landlord, with an appealing glance at Willett. "Wud ye lave us now, wid th' ould women an' childer huddled like catthle in the foort, an' Walther Butler at Niagary an' Sir John on the Sacandagy! Sure, 'tis foolin' ye arre, Captain dear—wid the foine ale I have below, an' divil a customer—the town's that crazy wid fear o' Sir John! 'Tis not f'r meself I shpake, sorr," he added airily, "but 'tis the jooty o' the military f'r to projooce thraffic an' thrade an' the blessing of prosperity at the p'int o' the bagnet, sorr."

"In that case," observed Willett, "you ought to stay, Carus. Burke can't attend to his tavern and take time to chase Sir John back to the lakes."

"Thrue f'r ye, sorr!" exclaimed Burke, with a twinkle in his gray eye. "Where wud th' b'ys find a dhram, sorr, wid Jimmy Burke on a scout, sorr, thrimmin' the Tories o' Mayfield, an' runnin' the Scotch loons out o' Perth an' the Galways, glory be!"

He bustled out to fetch us a dish of pink clingstone peaches, grown in the gardens planted by the great Sir William. Truly, Sir John had lost much when he lost Johnson Hall; and now, like a restless ghost drawn back to familiar places, he haunted the spot that his great father had made to bloom like a rose in the wilderness. He was out there now, in the sunshine and morning haze, somewhere, beyond the blue autumn mist in the north—out there, disgraced, disinherited, shelterless, sullenly brooding, and plotting murder with his motley mob of Cayugas and painted renegades.

Colonel Willett rose and we all stood up, but he signaled those who had not finished eating to resume their places, and laying a familiar hand on my arm led me to the sunny bench outside the door where, at his nod, I seated myself beside him. He drew a map from his breast-pocket and studied in silence; I waited his pleasure.

The veteran seemed to have grown no older since I had last seen him four years since—indeed, he had changed little as I remembered him first, sipping his toddy at my father's house, and smiling his shrewd, kindly, whimsical smile while I teased him to tell me of the French war, and how he had captured Frontenac.

I was but seventeen years old when he headed that revolt in New York City, and, single-handed, halted the

British troops on Broad Street and took away their baggage. I was nineteen when he led the sortie from Stanwix. I had already taken my post in New York when he was serving with his Excellency in the Jerseys and with Sullivan in the west.

Of all the officers who served on the frontier, Marinus Willett was the only man who had ever held the enemy at check. Even Sullivan, returning from his annihilation of Indian civilization, was followed by a cloud of maddened savages and renegades that settled in his tracks, enveloping the very frontier which, by his famous campaign, he had properly expected to leave unharassed.

And now Marinus Willett was in command, with meager resources, indeed, yet his personal presence on the Tryon frontier restored something of confidence to those who still clung to the devastated region, sowing, growing, garnering, and grinding the grain that the half-starved army of the United States required to keep life within the gaunt rank and file. West Point, Albany, Saratoga called for bread; and the men of Tryon plowed and sowed and reaped, leaving their dead in every furrow—swung their scythes under the Iroquois bullets, cut their blood-wet hay in the face of ambush after ambush, stacked their scorched corn and defended it from barn, shack, and window. With torch and hatchet renegade and Iroquois decimated them; their houses kindled into flame; their women and children, scalped and throats cut, were hung over fences like dead game; twelve thousand farms lay tenantless; by thousands the widows and orphans gathered at the

blockhouses, naked, bewildered, penniless. There remained in all Tryon County but eight hundred militia capable of responding to a summons—eight hundred desperate men to leave scythe and flail and grist-mill for their rifles at the dread call to arms. Two dozen or more blockhouses, holding from ten to half a hundred families each, were strung out between Stanwix Fort and Schenectady; these, except for a few forts, formed the outer line of the United States' bulwarks in the north; and this line Willett was here to hold with the scattered handful of farmers and Rangers.

Yet, with these handfuls, before our arrival he had already cleaned out Torlock; he had already charged through the flames of Currietown, and routed the renegades at Sharon—leading the charge, cocked-hat in hand, remarking to his Rangers that he could catch in his hat all the balls that the renegades could fire. Bob McKean, the scout, fell that day; nine men, bound to saplings, were found scalped; yet the handful under Willett turned on Torlock and seized a hundred head of cattle for the famishing garrison of Herkimer. Wawarsing, Cobleskill, and Little Falls were ablaze; Willett's trail lay through their smoking cinders, his hatchets hung in the renegades' rear, his bullets drove the raiders headlong from Tekakwitha Spring to the Kennyetto, and his Oneidas clung to the edges of invasion, watching, waiting, listening in the still places for the first faint sound of that advance that meant the final death-grapple. It was coming, surely coming: Sir John already harrying the Sacandaga; Haldimand reported on the eastern lakes; Ross and the Butlers ex-

pected from Niagara, and nothing now to prevent Clinton from advancing up the Hudson from New York, skirting West Point, and giving the entire north to the torch. This was what confronted Tryon County; but the army needed grain, and we were there to glean what we might between fitful storms, watching that solid, thunderous tempest darkening the north from east to west, far as the eye could see.

Colonel Willett had lighted his clay pipe, and now, map spread across his knees and mine, he leaned over, arms folded, smoking, and examining the discolored and wrinkled paper.

"Where is Adriutha, Carus?" he drawled.

I pointed out the watercourse, traced in blue, showing him the ancient site and the falls near by.

"And Carenay?"

Again I pointed.

"Oswaya?"

"Only tradition remains of that lost village," I said. "Even in the Great Rite those who pronounce the name know nothing more than that it once existed. It is so with Kayaderos and Danascara; nobody now knows exactly where they were."

"And Thendara?"

"Thendara *was*, and *will be*, but is not. In the Great Rite of the Iroquois that place where the first ceremony, which is called 'At the wood's edge,' begins is called Thendara, to commemorate the ancient place where first the Holder of Heaven talked face to face with the League's founder, Hiawatha."

The hawk-faced veteran smoked and studied the

map for a while; then he removed the pipe from his mouth, and, in silence, traced with the smoking stem a path. I watched him; he went back to the beginning and traced the path again and yet again, never uttering a word; and presently I began to comprehend him.

"Yes, sir," I said; "thus will the Long House strike the Oneidas—when they strike."

"I have sent belts—as you suggested," observed Willett carelessly.

I was delighted, but made no comment; and presently he went on in his drawling, easy manner: "I can account for Sir John, and I can hold him on the Sacandaga; I can account for Haldimand only through the cowardice or treachery of Vermont; but I can hold him, too, if he ever dares to leave the lakes. For Sir Henry Clinton I do not care a damn; like a headless chicken he tumbles about New York, seeing, hearing nothing, and no mouth left to squawk with. His head is off; one of his legs still kicks at Connecticut, t'other paddles aimlessly in the Atlantic Ocean. But he's done for, Carus. Let his own blood cleanse him for the plucking!"

The gaunt Colonel replaced his pipe between his teeth and gazed meditatively into the north:

"But where's Walter Butler?" he mused.

"Is he not at Niagara, sir?" I asked.

Willett folded his map and shoved it into his breast-pocket. "That," he said, "is what I want you to find out for me, Carus."

He wheeled around, facing me, his kindly face very serious:

"I have relieved you of your command, Carus, and have attached you to my personal staff. There are officers a-plenty to take your Rangers where I send them; but I know of only one man in Tryon County who can do what is to be done at Thendara. Send on your belt to Sachems of the Long House. Carus, you are a spy once more."

I had not expected it, now that the Oneidas had been warned. Chilled, sickened at the thought of playing my loathsome rôle once more, bitter disappointment left me speechless. I hung my head, feeling his keen eyes upon me; I braced myself sullenly against the overwhelming rush of repulsion surging up within me. My every nerve, every fiber quivered for freedom to strike that blow denied me for four miserable years. Had I not earned the right to face my enemies in the open? Had I not earned the right to strike? Had I not waited —God! had I not waited?

Appalled, almost unmanned, I bowed my head still lower as the quick tears of rage wet my lashes. They dried, unshed.

"Is there no chance for me?" I asked—"no chance for one honest blow?"

His kind eyes alone answered; and, like a schoolboy, I sat there rubbing my face, teeth clenched, to choke back the rebellious cry swelling my hot throat.

"Give me an Oneida, then," I muttered. "I'll go."

"You are a good lad, Carus," he said gently. "I know how you feel."

I could not answer.

"You know," he said, "how many are called, how

few chosen. You know that in these times a man must sink self and stand ready for any sacrifice, even the supreme and best."

He laid his hand on my shoulder: "Carus, I felt as you do now when his Excellency asked me to leave the line and the five splendid New York regiments just consolidated and given me to lead. But I obeyed; I gave up legitimate ambition; I renounced hope of that advancement all officers rightly desire; I left my New York regiments to come here to take command of a few farmers and forest-runners. God and his Excellency know best!"

I nodded, unable to speak.

"There is glory and preferment to be had in Virginia," he said; "there are stars to be won at Yorktown, Carus. But those stars will never glitter on this faded uniform of mine. So be it. Let us do our best, lad. It's all one in the end."

I nodded.

"And so," he continued pleasantly, "I send you to Thendara. None knows you for a partizan in this war. For four years you have been lost to sight; and if any Iroquois has heard of your living in New York, he must believe you to be a King's man. Your one danger is in answering the Iroquois summons as an ensign of a nation marked for punishment. How great that danger may be, you can judge better than I."

I thought for a while. The Canienga who had summoned me by belt could not prove I was a partizan of the riflemen who escorted me. I might have been absolutely non-partizan, traveling under escort of either

side that promised protection from those ghostly rovers who scalped first and asked questions afterward.

The danger I ran as clan-ensign of a nation marked for punishment was an unknown quantity to me. From the Canienga belt-bearer I had gathered that there was no sanctuary for an Oneida envoy at Thendara; but what protection an ensign of the Wolf Clan might expect, I could not be certain of.

But there was one more danger. Suppose Walter Butler should appear to sit in council as ensign of his mongrel clan?

"Colonel," I said, "there is one thing to be done, and, as there is nobody else to accomplish this dog's work, I must perform it. I am trying not to be selfish —not to envy those whose lines are fallen in pleasant places—not to regret the happiness of battle which I have never known—not to desire those chances for advancement and for glory that—that all young men—crave——"

My voice broke, but I steadied it instantly.

"I had hoped one day to do a service which his Excellency could openly acknowledge—a service which might, one day, permit him to receive me. I have never seen him. I think, now, I never shall. But, as you say, sir, ambitions like these are selfish, therefore they are petty and unworthy. He does know best."

The Colonel nodded gravely, watching me, his unlighted pipe drooping in his hand.

"There is one thing—before I go," I said. "My betrothed wife is with me. May I leave her in your care, sir?"

"Yes, Carus."

"She is asleep in that room above—" I looked up at the closed shutters, scarcely seeing them for the blinding rush of tears; yet stared steadily till my eyes were dry and hot again, and my choked and tense throat relaxed.

"I think," said the Colonel, "that she is safer in Johnstown Fort than anywhere else just now. I promise you, Carus, to guard and cherish her as though she were my own child. I may be called away—you understand that!—but I mean to hold Johnstown Fort, and shall never be too far from Johnstown to relieve it in event of siege. What can be done I will do on my honor as a soldier. Are you content?"

"Yes."

He lowered his voice: "Is it best to see her before you start?"

I shook my head.

"Then pick your Oneida," he muttered. "Which one?"

"Little Otter. Send for him."

The Colonel leaned back on the bench and tapped at the outside of the tavern window. An aide came clanking out, and presently hurried away with a message to Little Otter to meet me at Butlersbury within the hour, carrying parched corn and salt for three days' rations.

For a while we sat there, going over personal matters. Our sea-chests were to be taken to the fort; my financial affairs I explained, telling him where he might find my papers in case of accident to me. Then I turned

over to him my watch, what money I had of Elsin's, and my own.

"If I do not return," I said, "and if this frontier can not hold out, send Miss Grey with a flag to New York. Sir Peter Coleville is kin to her; and when he understands what danger menaces her he will defend her to the last ditch o' the law. Do you understand, Colonel?"

"No, Carus, but I can obey."

"Then remember this: She must never be at the mercy of Walter Butler."

"Oh, I can remember that," he said drily.

For a few moments I sat brooding, head between my hands; then, of a sudden impulse, I swung around and laid my heart bare to him—told him everything in a breath—trembling, as a thousand new-born fears seized me, chilling my blood.

"Good God!" I stammered, "it is not for myself I care now, Colonel! But the thought of him—of her—together—I can not endure. I tell you, the dread of this man has entered my very soul; there is terror at a hint of him. Can I not stay, Colonel? Is there no way for me to stay? She is so young, so alone——"

Hope died as I met his eye. I set my teeth and crushed speech into silence.

"The welfare of a nation comes first," he said slowly.

"I know—I know—but——"

"All must sacrifice to that principle, Carus. Have not the men of New York stood for it? Have not the men of Tryon given their all? I tell you, the army shall eat, but the bread they munch is made from blood-

wet grain; and for every loaf they bake a life has been offered. Where is the New Yorker who has not faced what you are facing? At the crack of the ambushed rifle our people drop at the plow, and their dying eyes look upon wife and children falling under knife and hatchet. It must be so if the army is to eat and liberty live in this country we dare call our own. And when the call sounds, we New Yorkers must go, Carus. Our women know it, even our toddling children know it, God bless them!—and they proudly take their chances—nay, they demand the chances of a war that spares neither the aged nor the weak, neither mother nor cradled babe, nor the hound at the door, nor the cattle, nor any living thing in this red fury of destruction!"

He had risen, eyes glittering, face hardened into stone. "Go to your betrothed and say good-by. You do not know her yet, I think."

"She is Canadienne," I said.

"She is what the man she loves is—if she honors him. His cause is hers, his country hers, his God is her God!"

"Her heart is with neither side——"

"Her heart is with you! Shame to doubt her—if I read her eyes! Read them, Carus!"

I wheeled, speechless; Elsin Grey stood before me, deadly pale.

After a moment she moved forward, laying her hand on my shoulder and facing Colonel Willett with a smile. All color had fled from her face, but neither lip nor voice quivered as she spoke:

"I think you do understand, sir. We Canadiennes

yield nothing in devotion to the women of New York. Where we love, we honor. What matters it where the alarm sounds? We understand our lovers; we can give them to the cause of freedom as well here in Tryon County as on the plains of Abraham—can we not, my betrothed?" she said, looking into my face; but her smile was heart-breaking.

"Child, child," said Willett, taking her free hand in both of his, "you speak a silent language with your eyes that no man can fail to understand."

"I failed," I said bitterly, as Willett kissed her hand, placed it in mine, and, turning, entered the open door.

"And what blame, Carus?" she whispered. "What have I been to you but a symbol of unbridled selfishness, asking all, giving nothing? How could you know I loved you so dearly that I could stand aside to let you pass? First I loved you selfishly, shamelessly; then I begged your guilty love, offering mine in the passion of my ignorance and bewilderment."

Her arm fell from my shoulder and nestled in mine, and we turned away together under the brilliant autumn glory of the trees.

"That storm that tore me—ah, Carus—I had been wrecked without your strong arm to bear me up!"

"It was you who bore me up, Elsin. How can I leave you now!"

"Why, Carus, our honor is involved."

"*Our* honor!"

"Yes, dear, ours."

"You—you bid me go, Elsin?"

"If I bid you stay, what would avail except to prove me faithless to you? How could I truly love you and counsel dishonor?"

White as a flower, the fixed smile never left her lips, nor did her steady pace beside me falter, or knee tremble, or a finger quiver of the little hand that lay within my own.

And then we fell silent, walking to and fro under the painted maple-trees in Johnstown streets, seeing no one, heeding no one, until the bell at the fort struck the hour. It meant the end.

We kissed each other once. I could not speak. My horse, led by Jack Mount, appeared from the tavern stables; and we walked back to the inn together.

Once more I took her in my arms; then she gently drew away and entered the open door, hands outstretched as though blinded, feeling her way—that was the last I saw of her, feeling her dark way alone into the house.

Senses swimming, dumb, deafened by the raging, beating pulses hammering in my brain, I reeled at a gallop into the sunny street, north, then west, then north once more, tearing out into the Butlersbury road. A gate halted me; I dismounted and dragged it open, then to horse again, then another gate, then on again, hailed and halted by riflemen at the cross-roads, which necessitated the summoning of my wits at last before they would let me go.

Now riding through the grassy cart-road, my shoulders swept by the fringing willows, I came at length to the Danascara, shining in the sunlight, and followed

its banks—the same banks from which so often in happier days I had fished. At times I traveled the Tribes Hill road, at times used shorter cuts, knowing every forest-trail as I did, and presently entered the wood-road that leads from Caughnawaga church to Johnstown. I was in Butlersbury; there was the slope, there the Tribes Hill trail, there the stony road leading to that accursed house from which the Butlers, father and son, some five years since, had gone forth to eternal infamy.

And now, set in a circle of cleared land and ringed by the ancient forests of the north, I saw the gray, weather-beaten walls of the house. The lawns were overgrown; the great well-sweep shattered; the locust-trees covered with grapevines—the cherry- and apple-trees to the south broken and neglected. Weeds smothered the flower-gardens, where here and there a dull-red poppy peered at me through withering tangles; lilac and locust had already shed foliage too early blighted, but the huge and forbidding maples were all aflame in their blood-red autumn robes. Here the year had already begun to die; in the clear air a faint whiff of decay came from the rotting heaps of leaves—decay, ruin, and the taint of death; and, in the sad autumn stillness, something ominous, something secret and sly—something of malice.

Seeing no sign of my Oneida, I walked my horse across the lawn and up to the desolate row of windows. The shutters had been ripped off their hinges; all within was bare and dark; dimly I made out the shadowy walls of a hallway which divided the house into halves. By the light which filtered through the soiled windows

I examined room after room from the outside, then, noiselessly, tried the door, but found it bolted from within as well as locked from without. Either the Butlers or the commissioners of sequestration must have crawled through a window to do this. I prowled on, looking for the window they had used as exit, examining the old house with a fascinated repugnance. The clapboards were a foot wide, evidently fashioned with care and beaded on the edges. The outside doors all opened outward; and I noted, with a shudder of contempt, the "witch's half-moon," or lunette, in the bottom of each door, which betrays the cowardly superstition of the man who lived there. Such cat-holes are fashioned for haunted houses; the specter is believed to crawl out through these openings, and then to be kept out with a tarred rag stuffed into the hole—ghosts being unable to endure tar. Faugh! If specters walk, the accursed house must be alive with them—ghosts of the victims of old John Butler, wraiths dripping red from Cherry Valley—children with throats cut; women with bleeding heads and butchered bodies, stabbed through and through—and perhaps the awful specter of Lieutenant Boyd, with eyes and nails plucked out, and tongue cut off, bound to the stake and slowly roasting to death, while Walter Butler watched the agony curiously, interested and surprised to see a disemboweled man live so long!

Oh, yes, there might well be phantoms in this ghastly mansion; but they had nothing to do with me; only the absent master of the house was any concern of mine; and, finding at last the window I sought for, I

shoved it open and climbed to the sill, landing upon the floor inside, my moccasined feet making no more sound than the padded toes of a tree-cat.

Then to prowl and mouse, stepping cautiously, stooping warily to examine dusty scraps lying on the bare boards—a dirty newspaper, an old shoe with buckle missing, a broken pewter spoon—all the sordid trifles that accent desolation. Once or twice I thought to make out moccasin tracks in the dust, as though some furtive prowler had anticipated me here, but the light filtering through the crusted panes was meager and uncertain, and, after all, it mattered nothing to me.

The house was divided by a hallway; there were two rooms on either side, all bare and empty save for scraps here and there, and in one room the collapsed and dusty carcass of a rat. On the walls there was nothing except a nail driven into the clay, which was crumbling between the facing of whitewashed brick. From the heavy oaken timbers of the wooden ceilings hung smutty banners of ancient cobwebs, stirring above me as I moved. It was the very abomination of sinister desolation.

Some vague idea of finding something that might aid me—some scrap of evidence I might chance on to kindle hope with—some neglected trifle to damn him and proclaim this monstrous marriage void—it was this instinct that led me into a house abhorred. Nothing I found, save, on one foul window-pane, names, diamond-cut, scrawled again and again: "Lyn," and "Cherry-Maid," repeated a score of times.

And long I lingered, pondering who had written it, and what it might mean, and who was "Lyn." As for

"Cherry-Maid," the name was used in the False Faces rites; and at that terrific orgy held on the Kennyetto before the battle of Oriskany, where the first split came in the walls of the Long House, and where that hag-sorceress, Catrine Montour, had failed to pledge the Oneidas to the war-post, the Cherry-Maid had taken part. Indeed, some said that she was a daughter of the Huron witch; but Jack Mount, who saw the rite, swore that the Cherry-Maid was but a beautiful child, painted from brow to ankle——

Suddenly I thought of the hag's daughter as Carolyn. Carolyn? Lyn! By heaven, the Cherry-Maid was Carolyn Montour, mistress of Walter Butler! Here in bygone days she had scrawled her name—here her title. And Walter Butler had been present at that frantic debauch where the False Faces cringed to their prophetess, Magdalen Brant. Perhaps it was there that this man had met his match in the lithe young animal whelped by the Toad-Woman—this slim, lawless, depraved child, who had led the False Faces in their gruesome rites and sacrifice!

I stared at the diamond scrawl; and before my eyes I seemed to see the three fires burning, the clattering rows of wooden masks, the white blankets of the sachems, the tawny, naked form of the Cherry-Maid, seated between samphire and hazel, her pointed fingers on her hips, her heavy hair veiling a laughing face, over which the infernal fire shadow played.

Ah, it was well! Beast linked to beast—what need of priest in the fierce mating of such creatures of the dusk? He was hers, and she his by all laws of nature,

and in the eternal fitness of things vast and savage. They must live and breed in the half-light of forests; they must perish as the sun follows the falling trees, creeping ever inexorably westward.

Somberly brooding, I turned and descended into the cellar. There was little light here, and I cared not to strike flint. Groping about I touched with my foot remains of bottles of earthenware, then made my way to the door again and began to ascend.

The stairway seemed steeper and more tortuous to me. As I climbed I became uneasy at its length. Then, in a second, it flashed on me that I had blundered upon a secret stairway[1] leading upward from the cellar. At this same instant my head brushed the ceiling; I gave a gentle push, and a trap-door lifted, admitting me to another flight of stairs, up which I warily felt my way. This must end in another trap-door on the second floor —I understood that—and began to reach upward, feeling about blindly until my hands fell on a bolt. This I drew; it was not rusty, and did not creak, and, as I slid it back, to my astonishment my fingers grew wet and greasy. The bolt had been *recently oiled!*

Now all alert as a gray wolf sniffing a strange trail that cuts his own, I warily lifted the trap to a finger's breadth. The crack of light dazzled me; gradually my blurred sight grew clearer; I saw a low, oblong window under the eaves of the steep, pointed roof; and, through it, the sunlight falling on the bare floor of a room all littered with papers, torn letters, and tape-

[1] Evidences of this stairway still exist in the ancient house of Walter Butler.

bound documents of every description. Could these be the Butler papers? I had heard that all documents had been seized by the commissioners after the father and son had fled. But the honorable commissioners of sequestration had evidently never suspected this stairway.

In spite of myself I started! *How* had I, then, entered it? Somebody must have mounted it before me, leaving the secret door open in the cellar, and I, groping about, had chanced upon it. But whoever left it open must have been acquainted with the house—an intimate here, if not one of the family!

When had this unknown entered? Was any one here *now?* At the thought my skin roughened as a dog bristles. Was I alone in this house?

Listening, motionless, nostrils dilated, every sense concentrated on that narrow crack of light, I crouched there. Then, very gradually, I raised the trap, higher, higher, laying it back against the upright of white oak.

I was in a tiny room—a closet, lighted by a slit of a window. Everywhere around me in the dust were small moccasin prints, pointing in every direction. I could see no door in the wooden walls of the closet, but I stepped out of the stair-well and leaned over, examining the moccasin tracks, tracing them, until I found a spot where they led straight up to the wall; and there were no returning tracks to be seen. A chill crept over me; only a specter could pass through a solid wall. The next moment I had bent, ear flattened to the wooden wainscot. *There was something moving in the next room!*

CHAPTER XII

THENDARA

Motionless, intent, holding my breath, I listened at the paneled wall. Through the wainscot I could hear the low rustling of paper; and I seemed to sense some heavier movement within, though the solid floor did not creak, nor a window quiver, nor a footfall sound.

And now my eyes began traveling cautiously over the paneled wall, against which I had laid my ear. No crack or seam indicated a hidden door, yet I knew there must be one, and gently pressed the wainscot with my shoulder. It gave, almost imperceptibly; I pressed again, and the hidden door opened a hair's breadth, a finger's breadth, an inch, widening, widening noiselessly; and I bent forward and peered into another closet like the one I stood in, also lighted by a loop for rifle-fire. As my head advanced, first a corner of the floor littered with papers came into my range of vision, then an angle of the wall, then a shadowy something which I could not at first make out—and I opened the door a little wider—scarcely an inch—holding it there.

The shadowy something moved; it was a human foot; and the next instant my eyes fell on a figure, partly in shade, partly in the light from the loophole

—an Indian, kneeling, absorbed in deciphering a document held flat on the bare floor.

Astounded, almost incredulous, I glared at the vision. Gradually the shock of the surprise subsided; details took shape under my wondering eyes—the slim legs, doubled under, clothed with fringed and beaded leggings to the hips, the gorgeously embroidered sporran, moccasins, and clout, the smooth, naked back, gleaming like palest amber under curtains of stiffly strung scarlet-and-gold traders' wampum—traders' wampum? What did *that* mean? And what did those heavy, double masses of hair indicate—those soft, twisted ropes of glossy hair, braided half-way with crimson silk shot with silver, then hanging a cloudy shock of black to the belted waist?

Here was no Iroquois youth—no adolescent of the Long House attired for any rite I ever heard of. The hip-leggings were of magnificent Algonquin work; the quill-set, sinew-embroidered moccasins, too. That stringy, iridescent veil of rose, scarlet, and gold wampum on the naked body was *de fantasie;* the belt and knife-sheath pure Huron. As for the gipsy-like arrangement of the hair, no Iroquois boy ever wore it that way; it hinted of the *gens de prairie.* What on earth did it mean? There was no paint on limb or body to guide me. Never had I seen such a being so dressed for any rite or any practise in North America! Oh, if Little Otter were only here! I stole a glance out of the loop, but saw nothing save the pale sunshine on the weeds. If the Oneida had arrived, he had surely already found my horse tied in the lilac thicket, and surely he

would follow me where the weeds showed him I had passed. He might wait for a while; but if I emerged not from the house I knew he would be after me, smelling along like a wolfhound until he had tracked me to a standstill. Should I wait for him? I looked at the kneeling figure. So absorbed was the strange young Indian in the document on the floor that I strained my eyes to make out its script, but could not decipher even the corner of the paper exposed to my view. Then it occurred to me that it was a strange thing for an Indian to read. Scarce one among the Iroquois, save Brant and the few who had been to Dr. Wheelock's school, knew A from Zed, or could more than scrawl their clan-mark to a birchen letter.

Suspicious lest, after all, I had to do with a blue-eyed Indian or painted Tory, I examined the unconscious reader thoroughly. And, after a little while, a strange apprehension settled into absolute conviction as I looked. So certain was I that every gathered muscle relaxed; I drew a deep, noiseless breath of relief, smiling to myself, and stepped coolly forward, letting the secret door swing to behind me with a deadened thud.

Like a startled tree-cat the figure sprang to its feet, whirling to confront me. And I laughed again, for I was looking into the dark, dilated eyes of a young girl.

"Have no fear," I began quietly; and the next instant the words were driven into my throat, for she was on me in one bound, hunting-knife glittering.

Round the walls we reeled, staggering, wrestling, clinched like infuriated wolverines. I had her wrist in my grip, squeezing it, and the bright, sparkling

knife soon clattered to the boards, but she suddenly set her crooked knee inside mine and tripped me headlong, hurling us both sideways to the floor, where we rolled, desperately locked, she twisting and reaching for the knife again and again, until I kicked it behind me and staggered to my feet, dragging her with me in all her fury. But her maddened strength, her sinuous twisting, her courage, so astonished me that again and again she sent me reeling almost to my knees, taxing my agility and my every muscle to keep her from tripping me flat and recovering her knife. At length she began to sway; her dark, defiant eyes narrowed to two flaming slits; her distorted mouth weakened into sullen lines, through which I caught the flash of locked teeth crushing back the broken, panting breath. I held her like a vise; she could no longer move. And when at last she knew it, her rigid features, convulsed with rage, relaxed into a blank, smooth mask of living amber.

For a moment I held her, feeling her whole body falling loose-limbed and limp—held her until her sobbing breath grew quieter and more regular. Then I released her; she reeled, steadying herself against the wall with one hand; and, stepping back, I sank one knee, and whipped the knife from the floor.

That she now looked for death at my hands was perfectly evident, I being dressed as a forest-runner who knows no sex when murder is afoot. I saw the flushed face pale slightly; the lip curl contemptuously. Proudly she lifted her head, haughtily faced me.

"Dog of bastard nation!" she panted; "look me between the eyes and strike!"

"Little sister," I answered gravely, using the soft Oneida idiom, "let there be peace between us."

A flash of wonder lit her dark eyes. And I said again, smiling: "O Heart-divided-into-two-hearts, te-ha-eho-eh, you are like him whom we name, after 'The Two Voices'—we of the Wolf. Therefore is there peace and love 'twixt thee and me."

The wonder in her eyes deepened; her whole body quivered.

"Who are you with a white skin who speak like a crested sachem?" she faltered.

"Tat-sheh-teh, little sister. I bear the quiver, but my war-arrows are broken."

"Oneida!" she exclaimed softly, clasping her hands between her breasts.

I stepped closer, holding out my arms; slowly she laid her hands in mine, looking fearlessly up into my face. I turned her palms upward and placed the naked knife across them; she bent her head, then straightened up, looking me full in the eyes.

Still smiling, I laid both my hands on the collar of my hunting-shirt, baring throat and chest; and, as the full significance of the tiny tattoo dawned upon her, she shivered.

"Tharon!" she stammered. "Thou! What have I done!" And, shuddering, cast the knife at my feet as though it had been the snake that rattles.

"Little sister——"

"Oh, no! no! What have I done! What have I dared! I have raised my hand against Him whom you have talked with face to face——"

"Only Tharon has done that," I said gently. "I but wear his sign. Peace, Woman of the Morning. There is no injury where there is no intent. We are not yet '*at the Forest's Edge.*'"

Slowly the color returned to lip and cheek, her fascinated eyes roamed from my face to the tattooed wolf and mark of Tharon crossing it. And after a little she smiled faintly at my smile, as I said:

"I have drawn the fangs of the Wolf; fear no more, Daughter of the Sun."

"I—I fear no more," she breathed.

"Shall an ensign of the Oneida cherish wrath?" I asked. "He who bears a quiver has forgotten. See, child; it is as it was from the beginning. Hiro."

I calmly seated myself on the floor, knees gathered in my clasped hands; and she settled down opposite me, awaiting in instinctive silence my next words.

"Why does my sister wear the dress of an adolescent, mocking the False Faces, when the three fires are not yet kindled?" I asked.

"I hold the fire-right," she said quickly. "Ask those who wear the mask where cherries grow. O sachem, those cherries were ripe ere I was!"

I thought a moment, then fixed my eager eyes on her.

"Only the Cherry-Maid of Adriutha has that right," I said. My heart, beating furiously, shook my voice, for I knew now who she was.

"I am Cherry-Maid to the three fires," she said; "in bud at Adriutha, in blossom at Carenay, in fruit at Danascara."

"Your name?"

"Lyn Montour."

I almost leaped from the floor in my excitement; yet the engrafted Oneida instinct of a sachem chained me motionless. "You are the wife of Walter Butler," I said deliberately, in English.

A wave of crimson stained her face and shoulders. Suddenly she covered her face with her hands.

"Little sister," I said gently, "is it not the truth? Does a Quiver-bearer lie, O Blossom of Carenay?"

Her hands fell away; she raised her head, the tears shining on her heavy lashes: "It is the truth."

"His wife?" I repeated slowly.

"His wife, O Bearer of Arrows! He took me at the False Faces' feast, and the Iroquois saw. Yet the cherries were still green at Danascara. Twice the Lenape covered their faces; twice 'The Two Voices' unveiled his face. So it was done there on the Kennyetto." She leaned swiftly toward me: "Twice he denied me at Niagara. Yet once, when our love was new—when I still loved him—he acknowledged me here in this very house, in the presence of a County Magistrate, Sir John Johnson. I am his wife, I, Lyn Montour! I have never lied to woman or man, O my elder brother!"

"And that is why you have come back?"

"Yes; to search—for something to help me—some record—God knows!—I have searched and searched—" She stretched out her bare arms and gazed hopelessly around the paper-littered floor.

"Will not Sir John uphold you with his testimony?" I asked.

"He? No! He also denies it. What can a woman

expect of a man who has broken parole?" she added, in contempt.

I leaned toward her, speaking slowly, and with deadly emphasis:

"Dare Walter Butler deny what the Iroquois Nation may attest?"

"He dare," she said, burning eyes on mine. "I am more Algonquin than Huron, and more than nine-tenths white. What is it to the Iroquois that this man puts me away? It was the Mohican and Lenape who veiled their faces, not the Iroquois. What is it to white men that he took me and has now put me away? What is it to them that he now takes another?"

"Another? Whom?" My lips scarcely formed the question.

"I do not know her name. When he returned from the horrors of Cherry Valley Sir Frederick Haldimand refused to see him. Yet he managed to make love to Sir Frederick's kinswoman—a child—as I was when he took me——"

She closed her eyes. I saw the lashes all wet again, but her voice did not tremble: "He is at Niagara with his Rangers—or was. And—when I came to him he laughed at me, bidding me seek a new lover at the fort——"

Her voice strangled. Twisting her fingers, she sat there, eyes closed, dumb, miserable. At last she gasped out: "O Quiver-bearer, with a white voice and a skin scarce whiter than my own, though your nation be sundered from the Long House, though I be an outcast of clans and nations, speak to me kindly, for my sadness

is bitter, and the ghost of my dead honor confronts me in every forest-trail!" She stretched out her arms piteously:

"Teach me, brother; instruct me; heal my bruised heart of hate for this young man who was my undoing —cleanse my fierce, desirous heart. I love him no longer; I—I dare not hate him lest I slay him ere he rights my wrongs. My sorrow is heavier than I can bear—and I am young, O sachem—not yet eighteen—until the snow flies."

She laid her face in her hands once more; through her slim fingers the bright tears fell slowly.

"Are you Christian, little sister?" I asked, wondering.

"I do not know. They say so. A brave Jesuit converted me ere I was unstrapped from the cradle-board—ere I could lisp or toddle. God knows. My own brother died in war-paint; my grandmother was French Margaret, my mother—if she be my mother—is the Huron witch of Wyoming; some call her Catrine, some Esther. Yet I was chaste—till *he* took me—chaste as an Iroquois maid. Thus has he wrought with me. Teach me to forgive him!"

And *this* the child of Catrine Montour? This that bestial creature they described to me as some slim, fierce temptress of the forests?

"Listen," I said gently; "if you are wedded by a magistrate, you are his wife; yet if that magistrate falsely witnesses against you, you can not prove it. I would give all I have to prove your marriage. Do you understand?"

She looked at me, uncomprehending.

"The woman I love is the woman he now claims as wife," I said calmly. Then, in that strange place, alone there together in the dim light, she lying full length on the floor, her hands clasped on my knees, told me all. And there, together, we took counsel how to bring this man to judgment—not the Almighty's ultimate punishment, not even that stern retribution which an outraged world might exact, but a merciful penance—the public confession of the tie that bound him to this young girl. For, among the Iroquois, an unchaste woman is so rare that when a maiden commits the fault she is like a leper until death releases her from her awful isolation.

Together, too, we searched the littered papers on the floor, piece by piece, bit by bit, but all in vain. And while kneeling there I heard a stealthy step behind me, and looked back over my shoulder, to see the Oneida, Little Otter, peering in at us, eyeballs fairly starting from his painted face. Lyn Montour eyed him silently, and without expression, but I laughed to see how surely he had followed me as I had expected; and motioned him away to await my coming.

It was, I should judge, nearly five o'clock when we descended by the open stairway to the ground floor. I held the window wide; she placed her hands on the sill and leaped lightly to the grass. I followed. Presently the lilac thicket parted and the tall Oneida appeared, leading my horse. One keen, cunning glance he gave at the girl, then, impassive, stood bolt upright beside my horse. He was superb, stripped naked to clout and moccasin, head shaved, body oiled and most elaborately

painted; and on his broad breast glimmered the Wolf lined in sapphire-blue. When the long roll of the dead thundered through the council-house, his name was the fourth to be called—Shononses. And never was chief of the Oneida nation more worthy to lift the antlers that no grave must ever cover while the Long House endures.

"Has my brother learned news of the gathering in the north?" I asked, studying the painted symbols on his face and body.

"The council sits at dawn," he replied quietly.

"At dawn!" I exclaimed. "Why, we have no time, then——"

"There is time, brother. There is always time to die."

"To—die!" I looked at him, startled. Did he, then, expect no mercy at the council? He raised his eyes to me, smiling. There was nothing of fear, nothing of boastfulness, even, in attitude or glance. His dignity appalled me, for I knew what it meant. And, suddenly, the full significance of his paint flashed upon me.

"You think there is no chance for us?" I repeated.

"None, brother."

"And yet you go?"

"And you, brother?"

"I am ordered; I am pledged to take such chances. But you need not go, Little Otter. See, I free you now. Leave me, brother. I desire it."

"Shononses will stay," he said impassively. "Let the Long House learn how the Oneidas die."

I shuddered and looked again at his paint. It was

inevitable; no orders, no commands, no argument could now move him. He understood that he was about to die, and he had prepared himself. All I could hope for was that he had mistaken the temper of the council; that the insolence of a revolted nation daring to present a sachem at the Federal Council might be overlooked—might be condoned, even applauded by those who cherished in their dark hearts, locked, the splendid humanity of the ancient traditions. But there was no knowing, no prophesying what action a house divided might take, what attitude a people maddened by dissensions, wrought to frenzy by fraternal conflict, might assume. God knows the white man's strife was barbarous enough, brother murdering brother beneath the natal roof. What, then, might be looked for from the fierce, proud people whose Confederacy was steadily crumbling beneath our touch; whose crops and forests and villages had gone roaring up into flames as the vengeance of Sullivan, with his Rangers, his Continentals, and his Oneidas, passed over their lands in fire!

"Where sits the council?" I asked soberly.

"At the Dead-Water."

It was an all-night journey by the Fish House-trails, for we dared not strike the road, with Sir John's white demons outlying from the confluence to Frenchman's creek.

I looked at my horse. Little Otter had strapped ammunition and provisions to the saddle, leaving room for a rider. I turned to Lyn Montour; she laid her hands on my shoulders, and I swung her up astride the saddle.

"Now," I said briefly; and we filed away into the north, the Oneida leading at a slow trot.

I shall never forget the gloom, the bitter misery of that dark trail where specters ever stared at me as I journeyed, where ghosts arose in every trail—pale wraiths of her I loved, calling me back to love again. And "Lost, lost, lost!" wept the little brooks we crossed, all sobbing, whispering her name.

What an end of all—to die now, leaving life's work unfinished, life's desire unsatisfied—all that I loved unprotected and alone on earth. What an end to it all—and I had done nothing for the cause, nothing except the furtive, obscure work which others shrank from! And now, skulking to certain death, was denied me even the poor solace of an honored memory. Here in this shaggy desolation no ray of glory might penetrate to gild my last hour with a hero's halo; contempt must be my reward if I failed. I must die amid the scornful laughter of Iroquois women, the shrill taunts of children, the jeers of renegade white men, who pay a thief more honor at the cross-roads gallows than they pay a convicted spy. Why, I might not even hope for the stern and dignified justice that the Oneida awaited—an iron justice that respected the victim it destroyed; for he came openly as a sachem of a disobedient nation in revolt, daring to justify his nation and his clan. But I was to act if not to speak a lie; I was to present myself as a sleek non-partizan, symbolizing only a nobility of the great Wolf clan. And if any man accused me as a spy, and if suspicion became conviction, the horrors of my degradation would be inconceivable. Yet, plying

once more my abhorred trade, I could only obey, hope against hope, and strive to play the man to the end, knowing what failure meant, knowing, too, what my reward for success might be—a low-voiced "Thank you" in secret, a grasp of the hands behind locked doors—a sum of money pressed on me slyly—*that* hurt most of all—to put it away with a smile, and keep my temper. Good God! Does a Renault serve his country for money! Why, *why*, can they not understand, and spare me that!—the wages of the wretched trade!

Darkness had long since infolded us; we had slackened to a walk, moving forward between impervious walls of blackness. And always on the curtain of the inky shadow I saw Elsin's pallid face gazing upon me, until the vision grew so real that I could have cried out in my anguish, reeling forward, on, ever on, through a blackness thick as the very shadows of the pit that hides lost souls!

At midnight we halted for an hour. The Oneida ate calmly; Lyn Montour tasted the parched corn, and drank at an unseen spring that bubbled a drear lament amid the rocks. Then we descended into the Drowned Lands, feeling our spongy trail between osier, alder, and willow. Once, very far away, I saw a light, pale as a star, low shining on the marsh. It was the Fish House, and we were near our journey's end—perhaps the end of all journeys, save that last swift trail upward among those thousand stars!

It was near to dawn when we came out upon the marsh; and above, I heard the whir and whimpering rush of wild ducks passing, the waking call of birds,

twittering all around us in the darkness; the low undertone of the black water flowing to the Sacandaga.

Over the quaking marsh we passed, keeping the trodden trail, now wading, now ankle-deep in cranberry, now up to our knees in moss, now lost in the high marsh-grass, on, on, through birch hummocks, willows, stunted hemlocks and tamaracks, then on firm ground once more, with the oak-mast under foot, and the white dawn silvering the east, and my horse breathing steam as he toiled on.

Suddenly I was aware of a dark figure moving through the marsh, parallel, and close to me. The Oneida stopped, stared, then drew his blanket around him and sat down at the foot of a great oak.

We had arrived at Thendara! Now, all around us in the dim glade, tall forms moved—spectral shapes of shadowy substance that drifted hither and thither, passing, repassing, melting into the gloom around, until I could scarce tell them from the shreds of marsh fog that rose and floated through the trees around us.

Slowly the heavens turned to palest gold, then to saffron. All about us shadowy throngs arose to face the rising sun. A moment of intense stillness, then a far, faint cry, "Koue!" And the glittering edge of the sun appeared above the wooded heights. Blinding level rays fell on the painted faces of the sachems of the Long House, advancing to the forest's edge; the Oneida strode forward, head erect, and I, with a sign to the girl at my side, followed.

As we walked through the long, dead grass, I, watching sidewise, noted the absence of the Senecas.

Was it for them the condolence? Suddenly it struck me that to our side of the circle belonged the duty of the first rites. Who would speak? Not the Oneidas, for there was none, except Little Otter and myself. Who then? The Cayugas?

I shot a side glance among the slowly moving forms. Ah! that was it! A Cayuga sachem led the march.

The circle was already forming. I saw the Senecas now; I saw all the sachems seating themselves in a cleared space where a birch fire smoldered, sweetening the keen morning air with its writhing, aromatic smoke; I saw the Oneida cross proudly to his place on our side; and I seated myself beside him, raising my eyes to the towering figure of Tahtootahoo, the chief sachem and ensign of the great Bear Clan of the Onondaga nation, who stood beside the Cayuga spokesman in whispered conference.

To and fro strode the Cayuga, heavy head bent; to and fro, pacing the circle like a stupefied panther. Once his luminous eyes gleamed on mine, shifted blankly to the Oneida, and thence along the motionless circle of painted faces. Mohawk, Seneca, Onondaga were there, forming half the circle; Oneida, Cayuga, and Tuscarora welded it to a ring. I glanced fearfully from ensign to ensign, but saw no Delaware present; and my heart leaped with hope. Walter Butler had lied to me; the Lenni-Lenape had never sat at this rite; his mongrel clan had no voice here. He had lied.

The pipe had been lighted and was passing in grave silence. I received it from a Tuscarora, used it, and handed it to the Oneida, watching the chief sachem of

the Senecas as he arose to deliver his brief address of welcome. He spoke in the Seneca dialect, and so low that I could understand him only with greatest difficulty, learning nothing except that a Seneca Bear was to be raised up to replace a dead chief slain at Sharon.

Then a very old sachem arose and made a sign which was the symbol of travel. We touched hands and waited, understanding the form prescribed. Alas, the mourning Senecas had no longer a town to invite us to; the rite must be concluded where we sat; we must be content with the sky for the roof which had fallen in on the Long House, the tall oaks for the lodge-poles, the east and west for the doors broken down by the invasion.

Solemnly the names of the score and three legendary towns were recited, first those of the Wolf, next of the Tortoise, then of the Bear; and I saw my Wolf-brethren of the four classes of the Mohawks and Cayugas staring at me as I rose when they did and seated myself at the calling of my towns. And, by heaven! I noted, too, that the Tuscaroras of the Grey Wolf and the Yellow Wolf knew their places, and rose only after we were seated. Except for the Onondaga Tortoise, a cleft clan awaits the pleasure of its betters. Even a Delaware should know that much, but Walter Butler was ever a liar, for it is not true that the Anowara or Tortoise is the noble clan, nor yet the Ocquari. It is the Wolf, the Oquacho Clan; and the chiefs of the Wolf come first of all!

Suddenly the sonorous voice of the Seneca broke the silence, pronouncing the opening words of the most sacred rite of the Iroquois people:

"*Now to-day I have been greatly startled by your voice coming through the forest to this opening*——"

The deep, solemn tones of the ancient chant fell on the silence like the notes of a sad bell. It was, then, to be a double rite. Which nation among the younger brothers mourned a chief? I looked at the Oneida beside me; his proud smile softened. Then I understood. Good God! They were mourning him, *him*, as though he were already dead!

The Seneca's voice was sounding in my ears: "*Now, therefore, you who are our friends of the Wolf Clan*—" I scarcely heard him. Presently the "Salute" rolled forth from the council; they were intoning the "Karenna."

I laid my hand on the Oneida's wrist; his pulse was calm, nor did it quicken by a beat as the long roll of the dead was called:

"*Continue to listen,*
Thou who wert ruler,
Hiawatha!
Continue to listen,
Thou who wert ruler:
That was the roll of you—
You who began it—
You who completed
The Great League!—
Continue to listen,
Thou who wert ruler:
That was the roll of you——"

The deep cadence of the chanting grew to a thunderous sound; name after name of the ancient dead was

called, and the thrilling response swelled, culminating in a hollow shout. Then a pause, and the solemn tones of a single voice intoning the final words of gloom.

For ten full minutes there was not a sound except the faint snapping of the smoking birch twigs. Then up rose the chief sachem of the Cayugas, cast aside his blanket, faced the circle, dark, lean arm outstretched; and from his lips flowed the beautiful opening words of the Younger Nations:

"*Yo o-nen o-nen wen-ni-teh onen*——"

"*Now—now this day—now I come to your door where you mourn. . . . I will enter your door and come before the ashes and mourn with you there. And these words will I speak to comfort you!*"

The music of the voice thrilled me:

"*To the warriors, to the women, and also to the children; and also to the little ones creeping on the ground, and also to those still tied to the cradle-board. . . . This we say, we three brothers. . . .*

"*Now another thing we will say, we younger brothers. You mourn. I will clear the sky for you so that you shall not behold a cloud. And also I give the sun to shine upon you, so that you can look peacefully upon it when it goes down. You shall see it when it is going. Yea, ye shall look peacefully upon it when it goes down. . . .*

"*Now another thing we say, we younger brothers. If any one should fall, then the antlers shall be left on the grave. . . .*

"*Now another thing we say, we younger brothers.*

We will gird the belt on you with the quiver, and the next death will receive the quiver whenever you shall know that there is death among us, when the fire is made and the smoke is rising. This we say and do, we three brothers.

"Now I have finished. Now show me the man!"

Slowly the Oneida rose from my side and crossed the circle. Every eye was on him; he smiled as he halted, sweeping the throng with a tranquil glance. Then, drawing his blanket about him he stepped from the sanctuary of the council-ring out into the forest; and after him glided a Mohawk warrior, with face painted black, in token of his terrific office.

A dead silence fell upon the council.

The pulse was drumming in ears and throat when I arose; and, as the Mohawk executioner slipped noiselessly past me, I seized him by the clout-belt, and, summoning every atom of strength, hurled him headlong at my feet, so that he lay stunned and like one dead.

A roar of astonishment greeted me; a score of voices cried out savagely on my violation of the fire.

"It is you who violate it!" I answered, trembling with fury; "you who dare pronounce the sentence of death without consulting the four classes of the Oneida!"

A Mohawk sachem arose, casting his scarlet robes at his feet, and pointed at me, hissing: "Where are the Oneida classes? I dare you to tell us where the ensigns hide! Where are they? Speak!"

"Here!" I said, tearing my cape open. "Read

that sign, O Canienga! I answer for the four classes of my nation, and I say that Oneida shall go free! Now let him who dare accuse me stand forth. It is a Wolf of Tharon who has spoken!"

Absolute silence greeted me. I had risked all on the hazard.

The executioner had staggered to his feet again, and now stood outside the circle leaning against a young oak-tree, half stunned, mechanically rubbing the twigs and dead leaves from the sticky black paint that masked his visage. I wheeled on him and bade him remain where he was until the council's will was made known; then I walked into the circle; and when they cried out that I had no franchise, I laughed at them, challenging them to deny me my right to stand here for the entire Oneida nation.

For there was nothing now to do but to carry the desperate enterprise through or perish. I dared not stop to consider; to attempt to remember precedents. I turned on the Mohawks haughtily, demanding that privilege which even they could not refuse; I claimed clan-brotherhood from every Wolf in the Long House; and when the council accorded it, I spoke:

"Now I say to you, O you wise men and sachems, that this Oneida shall not die, because the four classes speak through my mouth! Who is there to give me the lie? Why are your eight score Oneidas absent—the eight score who still remain in the Long House? Surely, brothers, there are sachems among them? Why are they not here? Do you fear they might not agree to the punishment of the Oneida nation?"

I folded my arms and stared at the Mohawks.

"Clan ties are close, national ties closer, but strongest and closest of all, the six iron links that form the Great League! Why do you punish now? *How* can you punish now? Is it well to break the oldest League law to punish those who have broken the law of the League?"

A Mohawk sachem answered in a dozen stinging words that the League itself was broken; but ere he could finish I stopped him with a gesture.

Then, summoning all my powers, I burst out into a passionate protest, denying that the Great League was broken, glorying in its endurance, calling on every nation to uphold it. And instantly, although not a muscle moved nor a word was uttered, I felt that I had the council with me, that my passion was swaying them, that what I asserted they believed. I laughed at the neutrality of the Tuscaroras, at the half-hearted attitude of the Onondagas; I made light of the rebellion of the greater portion of the Oneida nation.

"It is a passing fancy, a whim. The battle-breeze from this white man's war has risen to a tempest, unroofing the Long House, scattering you for the moment, creating a disorder, inciting a passion foreign to the traditions of the Iroquois. I tell you to let the tempest pass and blame no one, neither Tuscarora, Onondaga, nor Oneida. And when the storm has died out, let the Six Nations gather again from their hiding-places and build for the Long House a new roof, and raise new lodge-poles, lest the sky fall down and the Confederacy lie in ashes forever!"

I had ended. A profound hush followed, broken by a low word of approval, then another, then another. Excited, scarcely knowing what I had done, incredulous that I alone had actually stemmed the tide, and, in a breath, overturned the entire plan of the Butlers and of the demoralized Iroquois, I seated myself beside the Tuscaroras, breathing heavily, alert for a sound that might indicate how my harangue had been received.

Muttered expressions of approval, an emphatic word here and there, and not an orator to dispute me!—why, this was victory—though, until the clans had deliberated, I could not know the Federal verdict. But gradually it dawned on me that I had at least stopped the murder of my Oneida, and had lulled all suspicion concerning myself. With a thrill of joy I heard the Seneca spokesman call for the youth to be raised in place of the dead chief; with a long-drawn breath of relief I saw the ancient belts brought, and listened to the reading of the archives from them.

The council ended. One by one the sachems spoke to me kindly, then went their way, some taking to canoes, others filing off through the forest, until I found myself standing there alone before the smoldering fire, the forest before me, the noon sun blazing overhead.

The Oneida, motionless now in the midst of those who had but an hour before decreed his death, watched the plumed sachems pass him in silence. Neither he nor they uttered a word; but when the last canoe had glided off down the Dead Water toward the Sacandaga, and the last tall form faded from view in thicket, marsh, and forest, Little Otter turned and came quietly to me, lay-

ing my hands on his heart, and looking me steadily in the eyes. Then together we returned, picking our path through the marsh, until we came to Lyn Montour. As she rose to meet us, a distant sound in the forest attracted the Oneida's attention. I heard it, too; it was the gallop of horses, coming from the north. No Iroquois rode a horse.

Nearer, nearer sounded the drumming thud of the hoofs. I could feel the sodden marsh jarring now—hear the brush crackle and snap.

Suddenly a horseman galloped out of the forest's edge, drew bridle at the clearing, bent and examined the covered fire, struck his forehead, and stared around him.

The horseman was Walter Butler.

CHAPTER XIII

THENDARA NO MORE

Astounded at the apparition, yet instantly aware of his purpose, I sprang forward to meet him. That he did not immediately know me in my forest dress was plain enough, for he hastened my steps with an angry and imperious gesture, flung himself from his saddle, laid down his rifle, and strode to the heap of ashes that had once been the council-fire of Thendara—now Thendara no more.

His face was still flushed with passion when I came up, my rifle cradled in the hollow of my left arm; his distorted features worked silently as he pointed at the whitening ashes. Suddenly he burst out into a torrent of blasphemy.

"What in God's name does this mean?" he shouted. "Have the Iroquois dared leave this fire before I've had my say?"

His rifle rested between him and me, barrel tilted across a rotting log, butt in the wet marsh grass. I took a quick step forward and dislodged the weapon, as though by accident, so that it lay where I could set my foot upon it if necessary. Instantly he faced me, alert, menacing; his dusky eyes lighted to a yellow glare; but when his gaze met mine sheer astonishment held him dumb.

"Captain Butler," I said, controlling the fierce quiver in my voice, "it is not this dead council-fire of Thendara that concerns a Yellow Wolf-whelp."

"No," he said, drawing a long breath, "it is not this fire that concerns us—" The voice died in his throat. Astonishment still dominated; he stared and stared. Then a ghastly laugh stretched his features—a soundless, terrible laugh.

"So you have come to Thendara after all!" he said. "In your fringes and thrums and capes and bead-work I did not know you, Mr. Renault, nor did I understand that Gretna Green is sometimes spelled Thendara!" He pointed at the ashes; an evil laugh stretched his mouth again:

"Thendara *was!* Thendara *will be!* Thendara—Thendara no more! And I am too late?"

The evil, silent laugh grew terrible: "Well, Mr. Renault, I had business elsewhere; yet, had I known you had taken to forest-running, I would have come to meet you at Thendara. However, I think there is still time to arrange one or two small differences of opinion that have arisen between you and me."

"There is still time," I said slowly.

He cast an involuntary glance at his rifle; made the slightest motion; hesitated, looking hard at me. I shook my head.

"*Not* that way?" he inquired blandly. "Well," with a cool shrug, "that was *one* way to arrange matters, Mr. Renault—and remember I offered it! Remember that, Mr. Renault, when men speak of you as they speak of Boyd!"

The monstrous insult of the menace left me outwardly unmoved; yet I wondered he had dared, seeing how helpless he must be did I but raise my rifle.

"Well, Mr. Renault," he sneered, "I was right, it seems, concerning that scrap o' treason unearthed in your chambers. God! how you flouted that beast, Sir Henry, and his fat-headed adjutant!"

He studied me coldly: "Do you mean to let me have my rifle?"

"No."

"Oh! you mean murder?"

"I am no executioner," I said contemptuously. "There are those a-plenty who will paint black for a guinea—after a court martial. There are those who *paint for war*, too, Mr. Butler."

I talked to gain time; and, curiously enough, he seemed to aid me, being in nowise anxious to force my hand. Ah! I should have been suspicious at that—I realized it soon enough—yet the Iroquois, leaving Thendara for the rites at the Great Tree, were not yet out of sound of a shout, or of a rifle-shot—though I meant to take him alive, if that were possible. And all the while I watched his every careless gesture, every movement, every flutter of his insolent eyelids, ready to set foot upon his rifle and hold him to the spot. He no longer appeared to occupy himself with the recovery of his rifle; he wore neither pistol nor knife nor hatchet; indeed, in his belt I saw a roll of paper, closely scribbled, and knew it to be a speech composed for delivery at this fire, now burned out forever.

He placed his hands on his hips, pacing to and fro

the distance between the fire and the edge of the Dead Water, now looking thoughtfully up into the blue sky, now lost in reverie. And every moment, I believed, was a precious moment gained, separating him more and more hopelessly from his favorite Senecas, whom he might even now summon by a shout.

Presently he halted, with an absent, upward glance, then his gaze reverted to me; he drew out a handsome gold watch, examined it with expressionless interest, and slowly returned it to the fob-pocket.

"Well, sir," he inquired, "do I take it that you desire to further detain me here, or do you merely wish to steal my rifle?"

"I think, truly, that you no longer require your rifle, Mr. Butler," I said quietly.

"A question—a matter of opinion, Mr. Renault." He waved his hand gracefully. "Who are your red friends yonder?" pointing toward the two distant forms at the edge of the willows.

"An Oneida and a quarter-breed."

"Oh—a squaw? By the head-gear I take the smaller one to be a Huron squaw. Which reminds me, Mr. Renault," he added, with a dull stare, "that the last time I had the pleasure of seeing your heels you were headed for the nearest parson!"

That awful, soundless laugh distorted his mouth again:

"I could scarcely be expected to imagine," he added, "that it was as far as this to Gretna Green. Is the Hon. Miss Grey with you here?"

"No, Mr. Butler, but your wife is with me."

"Oh!" he sneered; "so you have learned at last what she is?"

"You do not understand," I continued patiently. "I speak of your wife, Mr. Butler. Shall I name her?"

He looked at me narrowly. Twice his lips parted as though to speak, but no sound came.

"The woman yonder is Lyn Montour," I said in a low voice.

The yellow flare that lighted his black eyes appalled me.

"Listen to me," I went on. "That I do not slay you where you stand is because *she* is yonder, watching us. God help her, you shall do her justice yet! You are my prisoner, Mr. Butler!" And I set my foot upon his rifle.

He did not seem to hear me; his piercing gaze was concentrated on the two distant figures standing beside the horse.

I waited, then spoke again; and, at the sound of my voice, he wheeled on me with a snarl.

"You damned spy!" he stammered; "I'll stop your dirty business now, by God!" and, leaping back, whipped a ranger's whistle to his lips, waking the forest echoes with the piercing summons ere I had bounded on him and had borne him down, shoulder-deep in moss and marsh-grass.

Struggling, half smothered by the deep and matted tangle, I heard the startled shout of the Oneida; the distant crashing of many men running in the underbrush; and, throttling him with both hands, I dragged

him to his feet and started toward the Oneida, pulling my prisoner with me. But a yell from the wood's edge seemed to put fresh life into him; he bit and scratched and struggled, and I labored in vain to choke him or stun him. Then, in very desperation and fear of life, I strove to kill him with my hands, but could not, and at last hurled him from me to shoot him; but he had kicked the flint from my rifle, and, as I leveled it, he dropped on the edge of the Dead Water and wriggled over, splash! into the dark current, diving as my hatchet hit the waves. Then I heard the loud explosion of rifles behind me; bullets tore through the scrub; I turned to run for my life. And it was time.

"Ugh!" grunted the Oneida, as I came bursting headlong through the willows. "Follow now!" He seized the horse by the bridle; the girl mounted; then, leading the horse at a trot, we started due south through the tossing bushes.

A man in a green uniform, knee-deep in the grass, fired at us from the Stacking-Ridge as we passed, and the Oneida shook his rifle at him with a shout of insult. For now at last the whole game was up, and my mission as a spy in this country ended once and forever. No chance now to hobnob with Johnson's Greens, no chance to approach St. Leger and Haldimand. Butler was here, and there could be no more concealment.

Such an exhilaration of savage happiness seized me that I lost my head, and begged the Oneida to stop and let me set a flint and give the Royal Greens a shot or two; but the wily chief refused; and he was wise, for I should have known that the Sacandaga must already

be a swarming nest of Johnson's foresters and painted savages.

The heat was terrific in the willows; sweat poured from the half-naked Oneida as he ran, and my hunting-shirt hung soaked, flapping across my thighs.

We had doubled on them now, going almost due west. Far across the Vlaie I could see dark spots moving along the Dead Water, and here and there a distant rifle glimmering as the sun struck it. Now and then a faint shout was borne to our ears as we halted, dripping and panting in the birches to reconnoiter some open swale ahead, or some cranberry-bog crimsoning under the October sun.

We swam the marshy creek miles to the west, coming out presently into a rutty wagon-trail, which I knew ran south to Mayfield; but we dared not use it, so steered the dripping horse southeast, chancing rather to cross Frenchman's Creek, four miles above Varicks, and so, by a circle bearing east and south, reaching the Broad-albin trail, or some safe road between Galway and Perth, or, if driven to it, making for Saratoga as a last resort.

My face was burned deep red, and I was soaked from neck to heels, so that my moccasins rubbed and chafed at every step. The girl had sat her saddle while the horse swam, so that her legs only were wet. As for the Oneida, his oiled and painted skin shed water like the plumage of a duck. Lord knows, we left a trail broad and wet enough for even a Hessian to follow; and for that reason dared not halt north of Frenchman's Creek or short of Vanderveer's grist-mill.

As I plodded on, rifle atrail, I began to comprehend

the full import of what had occurred since the day before, when I, with soul full of bitterness, had left Burke's Inn. Was it only a day ago? By Heaven, it seemed a year since I had looked upon Elsin Grey! And what a change in fortune had come upon us in these two score hours! Free to wed now—if we dared accept the heart-broken testimony of this poor girl—if we dared deny the perjured testimony of a dishonored magistrate, leagued with his fellow libertine, who, thank God, had at length learned something of the fury he used on others. Strange that in all this war I had never laid a rifle level save at him; strange that I had never seen blood shed in anger, through all these battle years, except the blood that now dried, clotting on my cheek-bone, where his shoulder-buckle had cut me in the struggle. His spurs, too, had caught in the skirt of my hunting-shirt, tearing it to the fringed hem, and digging a furrow across my instep; and the moccasin on that foot was stiff with blood.

Ah, if I might only have brought him off; if I might only have carried this guilty man to Johnstown! Yet I should have known that Sir John's men were likely to be within hail, fool that I was to take the desperate chance when a little parley, a little edging toward him, a sudden blow might have served. Yet I was glad in my heart that I had not used craft; cat traits are not instinctive with me; craft, stealth, a purring ambush—faugh! I was no coward to beat him down unawares. I had openly declared him prisoner, and I was glad I had done so. Why, I might have shot him as we talked, had I been of a breed to do murder—had I been inhu-

man enough to slay him, unwarned, before the very eyes of the woman he had wronged, and who still hoped for mercy from him lest she pass her life a loathed and wretched outcast among the people who had accepted her as an Iroquois.

Thinking of these things which so deeply concerned me, I plodded forward with the others, hour after hour, halting once to drink and to eat a little of our parched corn, then to the unspotted trail once more, imperceptibly gaining the slope of that watershed, the streams of which feed the Mayfield Creek, and ultimately the Hudson.

Varicks we skirted, not knowing but Sir John's scouts might be in possession, the peppery, fat patroon having closed his house and taken his flock to Albany; and so traveling the forest east by south, made for the head waters of that limpid trout-stream I had so often fished, spite of the posted warnings and the indignation of the fat patroon, who hated me.

I think it was about four o'clock in the afternoon when, pressing through brush and windfall, we came suddenly out into a sunny road. Beside the road ran a stream clattering down-hill over its stony bed—a clear, noisy stream, with swirling brown trout-pools and rapids, rushing between ledges, foaming around boulders, a joyous, rollicking, dashing, headlong stream, that seemed to cheer us with its gay clamor; and I saw the Oneida's stern eyes soften as he bent his gaze upon it. Poor little Lyn Montour slipped, with a sigh, from her saddle, while my horse buried his dusty nose in the sparkling water, drawing deep, cold draughts through

his hot throat. And here by the familiar head waters of Frenchman's Creek we rested in full sight of the grist-mill above us, where the road curved west. The mill-wheel was turning; a man came to the window overlooking the stream and stood gazing at us, and I waved my hand at him reassuringly, recognizing old Vanderveer.

Beyond the mill I could see smoke rising from the chimneys of the unseen settlement. Presently a small barefoot boy came out of the mill, looked at us a moment, then turned and legged it up the road tight as he could go. The Oneida, smoking his pipe, saw the lad's hasty flight, and smiled slightly.

"Yes, Little Otter," I said, "they take us for some of Sir John's people. You'll see them coming presently with their guns. Hark! There goes a signal-shot now!"

The smacking crack of a rifle echoed among the hills; a conch-horn's melancholy note sounded persistently.

"Let us go on to the Yellow Tavern," I said; and we rose and limped forward, leading the horse, whose head hung wearily.

Before we reached the Oswaya mill some men in their shirt-sleeves shot at us, then ran down through an orchard, calling on us to halt. One carried a shovel, one a rifle, and the older man, whom I knew as a former tenant of my father, bore an ancient firelock. When I called out to him by name he seemed confused, demanding to know whether we were Whigs or Tories; and when at length he recognized me he appeared to be vastly relieved. It seemed that he, Wemple, and his two sons

had been burying apples, and that hearing the shot fired, had started for their homes, where already the alarm had spread. Seeing us, and supposing we had cut him off from the settlement, he had decided to fight his way through to the mill.

"I'm mighty glad you ain't shot, Mr. Renault," he said in his thin, high voice, scratching his chin, and staring hard at the Oneida. "Seein' these here painted injuns sorter riled me up, an' I up an' let ye have it. So did Willum here. Lord, sir, we've been expecting Sir John for a month, so you must kindly excuse us, Mr. Renault!"

He shook his white head and looked up the road where a dozen armed men were already gathered, watching us from behind the fences.

"Sir John is on the Sacandaga," I said. "Why don't you go to Johnstown, Wemple? This is no place for your people."

He stood, rubbing his hard jaw reflectively.

"Waal, sir," he piped, "it's kind er hard to leave all you've got in the world." He added, looking around at his fields: "I'd be a pauper if I quit. Mebbe they won't come here, after all. Mebbe Sir John will go down the Valley."

"Besides, we ain't got our pumpkins in nor the winter corn stacked," observed one of his sons sullenly.

We all turned and walked slowly up the road in the direction of the big yellow tavern, old Wemple shaking his head, and talking all the while in a thin, flat, high-pitched voice: "It seems kind'r hard that Sir John can't quit his pesterin' an' leave folks alone. What call has

he to come back a-dodgin' 'round here year after year, a-butcherin' his old neighbors, Mr. Renault? 'Pears to me he's gone crazy as a mad dog, a-whirlin' round and round the same stump, buttin' and bitin' and clawin' up the hull place. Sakes alive! ain't he got no human natur'? Last Tuesday they come to Dan Norris's, five mile down the creek, an' old man Norris he was in the barn makin' a ladder, an' Dan he was gone for the cow. A painted Tory run into the kitchen an' hit the old woman with his hatchet, an' she fetched a screech, an' her darter, 'Liza, she screeched, too. Then a Injun he hit the darter, and he kep' a-kickin' an' a-hittin', an' old man Norris he heard the rumpus out to the barn, an' he run in, an' they pushed him out damn quick an' shot him in the legs. A Tory clubbed him an' ripped his skelp off, the old man on his knees, a-bellowin' piteous, till they knifed him all to slivers an' kicked what was left o' him into the road. The darter she prayed an' yelled, but 'twan't no use, for they cut her that bad with hatchets she was dead when Dan came a-runnin'. 'God!' he says, an' goes at the inimy, swingin' his milk-stool—but, Lord, sir, what can one man do? He was that shot up it 'ud sicken you, Mr. Renault. An' then they was two little boys a-lookin' on at it, too frightened to move; but when the destructives was a-beatin' old Mrs. Norris to death they hid in the fence-hedge. An' they both of 'em might agot clean off, only the littlest one screamed when they tore the skelp off'n the old woman; an' he run off, but a Tory he chased him an' ketched him by the fence, an' he jest held the child's legs between his'n, an' bent him back an' cut his throat,

the boy a-squealin' something awful. Then the Tory skelped him an' hung him acrost the fence. The only Norris what come out of it was the lad who lay tight in the fence-scrub—Jimmy. He's up at my house; you'll see him. He come here that night to tell us of them goin's on. He acts kinder stupid, like he ain't got no wits, an' he jests sets an' sets, starin' at nothin'—leastways at nothin' I kin see——"

His high-pitched, garrulous chatter, and the horrid purport of it, were to me indescribably ghastly. To hear such things told without tremor or emphasis or other emotion than the sullen faces of his two strapping sons—to hear these incredible horrors babbled by an old man whose fate might be the same that very night, affected me with such an overpowering sense of helplessness that I could find no word to reassure either him or the men and boys who now came crowding around us, asking anxiously if we had news from the Sacandaga or from the north.

All I could do was to urge them to leave their homes and go to Johnstown; but they shook their heads, some asserting that Johnstown was full of Tories, awaiting the coming of Walter Butler to rise and massacre everybody; others declaring that the Yellow Tavern, which had been fortified, was safer than Albany itself. None would leave house or land; and whether these people really believed that they could hold out against a sudden onslaught, I never knew. They were the usual mixture of races, some of low Dutch extraction, like the Vanderveers and Wemples, some high Dutch, like the Kleins; and, around me, I saw, recognized, and greeted

people who in peaceful days had been settled in these parts, and some among them had worked for my father —honest, simple folk, like Patrick Farris, with his pretty Dutch wife and tow-headed youngsters; and John Warren, once my father's head groom, and Jacob Klock, kinsman of the well-known people of that name.

The Oneida, pressed and questioned on every side, replied in guarded monosyllables; poor Lyn Montour, wrapped to the eyes in her blanket, passed for an Iroquois youth, and was questioned mercilessly, until I interposed and opened the tavern door for her and for Little Otter.

"I tell you, Wemple," I said, turning on the tavern porch to address the people, "there is no safety here for you if Walter Butler or Sir John arrive here in force. It will be hatchet and torch again—the same story, due to the same strange Dutch obstinacy, or German apathy, or Yankee foolhardiness. In the grain belt it is different; there the farmers are obliged to expose themselves because our army needs bread. But your corn and buckwheat and pumpkins and apples can be left for a week or two until we see how this thing is going to end. Be sensible; stack what you can, but don't wait to thresh or grind. Bury your apples; let the cider go; harness up; gather your cattle and sheep; pack up the clock and feather bed, and move to Johnstown with your families. In a week or two you will know whether this country is to be given to the torch again, or whether, by God's grace, Colonel Willett is to send Walter Butler packing! I'll wait here a day for you. Think it over.

"I have seen the Iroquois at the Sacandaga Vlaie. I saw Walter Butler there, too; and the woods were alive with Johnson's Greens. The only reason why they have not struck you here is, no doubt, because there was more plunder and more killing to be had along the Sacandaga. But when there remain no settlements there—when villages, towns, hamlets are in ashes, like Currietown, like Minnesink, Cherry Valley, Wyoming, Caughnawaga, then they'll turn their hatchets on these lone farms, these straggling hamlets and cross-road taverns. I tell you, to-day there is not a house unburned at Caughnawaga, except the church and that villain Doxtader's house—not a chimney standing in the Mohawk Valley, from Tribes Hill to the Nose. Ten miles of houses in ashes, ten miles of fields a charred trail!

"Now, do as you please, but remember. For surely as I stand here the militia call has already gone out, and this country must remain exposed while we follow Butler and try to hunt him down."

The little throng of people, scarcely a dozen in all, received my warning in silence. Glancing down the road, I saw one or two women standing at their house doors, and children huddled at the gate, all intently watching us.

"I want to send a message to Colonel Willett," I said, turning to the Oneida. "Can you go? Now?"

The tireless fellow smiled.

"Give us what you have to eat," I said to Patrick Farris, whose round and rosy little wife had already laid the board in the big room inside. And presently

we sat down to samp, apple-sauce, and bread, with a great bowl of fresh milk to each cover.

The Oneida ate sparingly; the girl mechanically, dull eyes persistently lowered. From the first moment that the Oneida had seen her he had never addressed a single word to her, nor had he, after the first keen glance, even looked at her. This, in the stress of circumstances, the forced and hasty marches, the breathless trail, the tension of the Thendara situation, was not extraordinary. But after excitement and fatigue, and when together under the present conditions, two Iroquois would certainly speak together.

Anxious, preoccupied as I was, I could not help but notice how absolutely the Oneida ignored the girl; and I knew that he regarded her as an Oneida invariably regards a woman no longer respected by the most chaste of all people, the Iroquois nation.

That she understood and passionately resented this was perfectly plain to me, though she neither spoke nor moved. There was nothing for me to do or say. Already I had argued the matter with myself from every standpoint, and eagerly as I sought for solace, for a ray of hope, I could not but understand how vain it were to ask a cynical world to believe that this young girl was Walter Butler's wife. No; with his denial, with the averted faces of the sachems on the Kennyetto, as she herself had admitted, with the denial of Sir John, what evidence could be brought forward to justify me in wedding Elsin Grey? Another thing: even if Sir John should admit that, acting in capacity of a magistrate of Tryon County, he had witnessed the marriage

of Walter Butler and Lyn Montour, what civil powers had a deposed magistrate; a fugitive who had broken parole and fled?

No, there was no legal tie here. I was not now free to wed; I understood that as I sat there, staring out of the window into the red west, kindling to flame behind the Mayfield hills.

The Oneida, rolling himself in his blanket, had stretched out on the bare floor by the hearth; the girl, head buried in her hands, sat brooding above the empty board. Farris fetched me ink and quill and the only sheet of paper in the settlement; but it was sufficiently large to tear in half; and I inked my rusty quill and wrote:

"YELLOW TAVERN,
"OSWAYA ON FRENCHMAN'S CREEK.

"COLONEL MARINUS WILLETT:

"*Sir*—I have the honor to report that the scout of two, under my command, proceeded, agreeable to orders, as far as the Vlaie, called Sacandaga Vlaie, arriving there at dawn and in time for the council and rites of Thendara, which were held at the edge of the Dead Water or Vlaie Creek.

"I flatter myself that the Long House has abandoned any idea of punishing the Oneidas for the present—the council recognizing my neutral right to speak for the Oneida nation. The Oneidas dissenting, naturally there could be no national unanimity, which is required at Thendara before the Long House embarks upon any Federal policy.

"Whether or not this action of mine was wise, you, sir, must judge. It may be that what I have done will only serve to consolidate the enemy in the next enterprise they undertake.

"My usefulness as a spy in Sir John's camp must prove abortive, as I encountered Captain Walter Butler at the Dead Water, who knows me, and who is aware of my business in New York. Attempting to take him, I made a bad matter of it, he escaping by diving. Some men in green uniforms, whom I suppose were foresters from Sir John's corps, firing on us, I deemed it prudent to take to my heels as far as the settlement called Oswaya, which is on Frenchman's Creek, some five miles above Varicks.

"The settlement is practically defenseless, and the people hereabout expect trouble. If you believe it worth while to send some Rangers here to complete the harvest, it should, I think, be done at once. Patrick Farris, landlord at the Yellow Tavern, estimates the buckwheat at five thousand bushels. There is also a great store of good apples, considerable pitted corn, and much still standing unstacked, and several acres of squashes and pumpkins—all a temptation to the enemy.

"I can form no estimate of Sir John's force on the Sacandaga. This letter goes to you by the Oneida runner, Little Otter, who deserves kind treatment for his services. I send you also, under his escort, an unfortunate young girl, of whom you have doubtless heard. She is Lyn Montour, and is by right, if not by law, the wife of Captain Walter Butler. He repudiates her; her own people disown her. I think, perhaps, some charitable lady of the garrison may find a home for her in Johnstown or in Albany. She is Christian by instinct if not by profession.

"Awaiting your instructions here, I have the honor to remain, Your humble and ob't servant,

"CARUS RENAULT,
"*Regt. Staff Capt.*"

The sun had set. Farris brought a tallow dip. He also laid a fire in the fireplace and lighted it, for the

evening had turned from chill to sheer dry cold, which usually meant a rain for the morrow in these parts.

Shivering a little in my wet deerskins, I sanded, folded, directed, and sealed the letter, laid it aside, and drew the other half-sheet toward me. For a few moments I pondered, head supported on one hand, then dipped quill in horn and wrote:

"*Beloved*—There is a poor young girl here who journeys to-night to Johnstown under escort of my Oneida. Do what you can for her in Johnstown. If you win her confidence, perhaps we both may help her. Her lot is sad enough.

"Dearest, I am to acquaint you that I am no longer, by God's charity, a spy. I now hope to take the field openly as soon as our scouts can find out just exactly where Major Ross and Butler's Rangers are.

"To my great astonishment, disgust, and mortification, I have learned that Walter Butler is near here. He evidently rode forward, preceding his command, in order to be present at an Iroquois fire. He was too late to work anybody a mischief in that direction.

"It is now our duty to watch for his Rangers and forestall their attack. For that purpose I expect Colonel Willett to send me a strong scout or to recall me to Johnstown. My impatience to hold you in my arms is tempered only by my hot desire to wash out the taint of my former duties in the full, clean flood of open and honorable battle.

"Time presses, and I must wake my Oneida. See that my horse is cared for, dearest. Remember he bore me gallantly on that ride for life and love.

"I dare not keep Colonel Willett's report waiting another minute. Good night, my sweet Elsin. All things must come to us at last. CARUS."

I dried the letter by the heat of the blazing logs. The Indian stirred, sat up in his blanket, and looked at me with the bright, clear eyes of a hound.

"I am ready, brother," I said gently.

It was cold, clear starlight when Farris brought my horse around. I set Lyn Montour in the saddle, and walked out into the road with her, my hand resting on her horse's mane.

"Try not to be sad," I whispered, as she settled herself in the stirrups like a slim young trooper, and slowly gathered bridle.

"I am no longer sad, Mr. Renault," she said tremulously. "I comprehend that I have no longer any chance in the world."

"Not among your adopted people," I said, "but white people understand. There is no reason, child, why you should not carry your head proudly. You are guiltless, little sister."

"I am truly unconscious of any sin," she said simply.

"You have committed none. His the black shame of your betrayal! And now that you know him for the foul beast he is, there can be no earthly reason that you should suffer either in pride or conscience. You are pitifully young; you have life before you—the life of a white woman, with its chances, its desires, its aims, its right to happiness. Take it! I bid you be happy, little sister; I bid you hope!"

She turned her face and looked at me; the ghost of a smile trembled on her lips; then, inclining her head

in the sweetest of salutes, she wheeled her horse out into the tremulous starlight. And after her stole the tall Oneida, rifle slanted across his naked shoulders, striding silently at her stirrup as she rode. I had a momentary glimpse of their shadowy shapes moving against the sky, then they were blotted out in the gloom of the trees, leaving me in the road peering after them through the darkness, until even the far stroke of the horse's feet died out, and there was no sound in the black silence save the hushed rushing of the stream hurrying through the shrouded hollow below.

Not a light glimmered in the settlement. The ungainly tavern, every window sealed with solid shutters, sprawled at the cross-roads, a strange, indistinct silhouette; the night-mist hung low over the fields of half-charred stumps, and above the distant bed of the brook a band of fog trailed, faintly luminous.

Never before had I so deeply felt the desolation of the northland. In a wilderness there is nothing forbidding to me; its huge earth-bedded, living pillars supporting the enormous canopy of green, its vastness, its mystery, its calm silence, may awe yet nothing sadden. But a vague foreboding enters when man enters. Where his corn grows amid the cinders of primeval things, his wanton gashes on tree and land, his beastly pollution of the wild, crystal waters, all the restlessness, and barrenness, and filth, and sordid deformity he calls his home —these sadden me unutterably.

I know, too, that Sir William Johnson felt as I do, loving the forest for its own beautiful, noble sake; and the great Virginian, who cared most for the majestic

sylvan gardens planted by the Almighty, grieved at destruction, and, even in the stress of anxiety, when his carpenters and foresters were dealing pitilessly with the woods about West Point in order to furnish timber for the redoubts and the floats for the great chain, he thought to warn his engineers to beware of waste caused by ignorance or wantonness.

Where rich and fertile soil is the reward for the desperate battle with an iron forest, I can comprehend the clearing of a wilderness, and admire the transformation into gentle hills clothed in green, meadows, alder-bordered waters, acres of grain, and dainty young orchards; but here, in this land, only the flats along the river-courses are worthy of cultivation; the rest is sand and rock deeply covered with the forest mast, and fertile only while that lasts. And the forest once gone, land and water shrivel, unnourished, leaving a desert amid charred stumps and the white phantoms of dead pines. I was ever averse to the cutting of the forests here, except for selected crops of ripened timber to be replaced by natural growth ere the next crop had ripened; and Sir William Johnson, who was wise in such matters, set us a wholesome example which our yeomen have not followed. And already lands cleared fifty years since have run out to the sandy subsoil; yet still the axes flash, still the great trees groan and fall, crashing through and smashing their helpless fellows; and in God's own garden waters shrink, and fire passes, and the deer flee away, and rain fails, because man passes in his folly, and the path of the fool is destruction.

Where Thendara was, green trees flourish to the glory of the Holder of Heaven.

Where the forest whitens with men, the earth mourns in ashes for the lost Thendara—Thendara! Thendara no more!

CHAPTER XIV

THE BATTLE OF JOHNSTOWN

Two weeks of maddening inactivity followed the arrival at the Yellow Tavern of an express from Colonel Willett, carrying orders for me to remain at Oswaya until further command, bury all apples, pit the corn, and mill what buckwheat the settlers could spare as a deposit for the army.

Not a word since that time had I heard from Johnstown, although it was rumored in the settlement that the Rangers had taken the field in scouts of five, covering the frontier to get into touch with the long-expected forces that might come from Niagara under Ross and Walter Butler, or from the east under St. Leger and Sir John, or even perhaps under Haldimand.

Never had I known such hot impatience, such increasing anxiety; never had I felt so bitterly that the last chance was vanishing for me to strike an honest blow in a struggle wherein I, hitherto inert, had figured so meanly, so ingloriously.

To turn farmer clodhopper now was heart-breaking. Yet all I could do was to organize a sort of home guard there, detail a different yokel every day to watch the road to Varicks, five miles below, by which the enemy must arrive if they marched with artillery and wagons,

as it was rumored they would. At night I placed a sentinel by the mill to guard against scalping parties, and another on the hill to watch the West and South. Meager defenses, one might say, and even the tavern was unstockaded, and protected only by loops and oaken shutters; but every man and woman was demanded for the harvest; even the children staggered off to the threshing-barns, laden with sheaves of red-stemmed buckwheat, or rolled pumpkins and squashes to the wagons, or shook down crimson apples for the men to cart away and bury.

The little Norris boy labored with the others—a thin, sallow child, heavy-eyed and silent. He had recovered somewhat from the shock of the tragedy he had witnessed, and strove to do what was asked of him, but when spoken to, seemed confused and slow of comprehension; and the tears were ever starting or smeared over his freckled face from cheek to chin.

Being an officer, the poor, heavy-witted folk looked to me for the counsel and wisdom my inexperience lacked. All I could do for them was to arrange their retreat to the tavern at the first signal of danger, and to urge that the women and children sleep there at night. My advice was only partly followed. As the golden October days passed, with no fresh alarm from the Sacandaga, their apathetic fatalism turned to a timid confidence that their homes and lands might yet be spared.

Wemple sold his buckwheat on promise of pay in paper dollars, and we milled it and barreled it, and made a deposit in Klein's sugar-bush.

Distant neighbors came a-horseback to the mill with news from neighbors, still more distant, that Sir John had retreated northward from the Sacandaga, toward Edward; that the Tories threatened Ballston; that Indians had been seen near Galway; that the garrison at Schenectady had been warned to take the field against St. Leger; that on Champlain General Haldimand had gathered a great fleet, and his maneuvers were a mystery to the scouts watching him. But no rumors were carried to us concerning Ross and Butler, except that strange vessels had been seen leaving Bucks Island.

The tension, the wearing anxiety, and harrowing chagrin that I had been left here forgotten, waxed to a fever that drove me all day restlessly from field to field, from house to barn, and back to the tavern, to sit watching the road for sign of a messenger to set me free of this dreary, hopeless place.

And on one bright, cold morning in late October, when to keep warm one must seek the sunny lee of the tavern, I sat brooding, watching the crimson maple-leaves falling from the forest in showers. Frost had come, silvering the stiffened earth, and patches of it still lingered in shady places. Oaks were brown, elms yellow; birches had shed their leaves; and already the forest stretched bluish and misty, set with flecks of scarlet maple and the darker patches of the pine.

On that early morning, just after sunrise, I sensed a hint of snow in the wind that blew out of the purple north; and the premonition sickened me, for it meant the campaign ended.

In an ugly and sullen mood I sat glowering at the

blackened weeds cut by the frost, when, hearing the sound of horses' feet on the hill, I rose and stood on tiptoe to see who might be coming at such a pace.

People ran out to the rear to look; nearer and nearer came the dull, battering gallop, then a rider rushed into view, leaning far forward, waving his arm; and a far cry sounded: "Express, ho! News for Captain Renault!"

An express! I sprang to the edge of the road as the horse thundered by; and the red-faced rider, plastered with mud, twisted in his saddle and hurled a packet at me, shouting: "Butler is in the Valley! Turn out! Turn out!" sweeping past in a whirlwind of dust and flying stones.

As I caught up the packet from the grass Farris ran out and fired his musket, then set the conch-horn to his mouth and sent a long-drawn, melancholy warning booming through the forest.

"Close up those shutters!" I said, "and fill the water-casks!"

Men came running from barn and mill, shouting for the women and children; men ran to the hill to look for signs of the enemy, to drive in cattle, to close and latch the doors of their wretched dwellings, as though bolt and bar could keep out the red fury now at last unloosened.

I saw a woman, to whose ragged skirts three children clung, toiling across a stump-field, staggering under a flour-sack full of humble household goods. One of the babies carried a gray kitten clasped to her breast.

Pell-mell into the tavern they hurried, white-faced,

panting, pushing their terrified children into dark corners and under tables.

"Tell that woman to let her cow go!" I shouted, as a frightened heifer dashed up the road, followed by its owner, jerked almost off her feet by the tether-rope. Old Wemple seized the distracted woman by the shoulder and dragged her back to the tavern, she weeping and turning her head at every step.

In the midst of this howling hubbub I ripped open my despatches and read:

"JOHNSTOWN,
"October 25, 1781.

"CAPT. RENAULT:

"*Sir*—Pursuant to urgent orders this instant arrived by express from Col. Willett at Fort Rensselaer, I have the honor to inform you that Major Ross and Capt. Walter Butler have unexpectedly struck the Valley at Warren's Bush with the following forces:

Eighth Regiment	25
Thirty-fourth Regiment	100
Eighty-fourth Highlanders Regiment	36
Sir John's Royal Greens Regiment	120
Yagers Regiment	12
Butler's Rangers	150
Indians	130
Renegades	40

With bat-horses, baggage-wagons, and camp-trains, including forces amounting to a thousand rifles.

"What portion of the invading army this flying column may represent is at present unknown to me.

"The militia call is out; expresses are riding the county to warn every post, settlement, and blockhouse; Colonel Willett, with part of the garrison at Fort Rens-

selaer, is marching on Fort Hunter to join his forces with your Rangers, picking up the scouts on his way, and expects to strike Butler at the ford below Tribes Hill.

"You will gather from this, sir, that Johnstown is gravely menaced, and no garrison left except a few militia. Indeed, our situation must shortly be deplorable if Colonel Willett does not deliver battle at the ford.

"Therefore, if you can start at once and pick up a post of your riflemen at Broadalbin Bush, it may help us to hold the jail here until some aid arrives from Colonel Willett.

"The town is panic-stricken. All last night the people stood on the lawn by Johnson Hall and watched the red glare in the sky where the enemy were burning the Valley. Massacre, the torch, and hatchet seem already at our thresholds. However, the event remains with God. I shall hold the jail to the last.

"Your ob't serv't,

"ROWLEY, *Major Com'nd'g.*"

For one dreadful moment every drop of blood seemed to leave my body. I sank into a chair, staring into the sunshine, seeing nothing. Then the pale face of Elsin Grey took shape before me, gazing at me sorrowfully; and I sprang up, shuddering, and looking about me. What in God's name was I to do? Go to her and leave these women and babies?—leave these dull-witted men to defend themselves? Why not? Every nerve in me tightened with terror at her danger, every heart-beat responded passionately to the appeal. Yet how could I go, with these white-faced women watching me in helpless confidence; with these frightened children gathering

around me, looking up into my face, reaching trustfully for my clenched hands?

In an agony of indecision I turned to the door and gazed down the road, an instant only, then leaped back and slammed the great oaken portal, shooting the bars.

Destiny had decided; Fate had cut the knot!

"Every man to a loop!" I called out steadily. "Wemple, take your sons to the east room; Klein, you and Farris and Klock take the west and south; Warren, look out for the west. They may try to fire the wooden water-leader. Mrs. Farris, see that the tubs of water are ready; and you, Mrs. Warren, take the women and children to the cellar and be ready to dip up buckets of water from the cistern."

Silence; a trample on the stairs as the men ran to their posts; not a cry, not a whimper from the children.

I climbed the stairs, and lying at full length beside the loop, cocked my rifle, and peered out. Almost instantly I saw a man dodge into Klein's house too quickly for me to fire. Presently the interior of the house reddened behind the windows; a thin haze of smoke appeared as by magic, hanging like a curtain above the roof. Then, with a crackling roar that came plainly to my ears, the barn behind the house was buried in flame, seeming almost to blow up in one huge puff of bluish-white smoke.

I heard Wemple's ancient firelock explode, followed by the crack of his sons' rifles, and I saw an Indian running across the pasture.

Klein's house was now curtained with blackish smoke; Wemple's, too, had begun to burn, the roof all

tufted with clear little flames, that seemed to give out no smoke in the sunshine. An Indian darted across the door-yard, and leaped into the road, but at the stunning report of Warren's rifle he stopped, dropping his gun, and slowly sank, face downward, in the dust.

Then I heard the barking scalp-yelp break out, and a storm of bullets struck the tavern, leaving along the forest's edge a low wall of brown vapor, which lingered as though glued to the herbage; and through it, red as candle-flames in fog, the spirting flicker of the rifles played, and the old tavern rang with leaden hail. Suddenly the fusillade ceased. Far away I heard a ranger's whistle calling, calling persistently.

Wemple's barn was now burning fiercely; the mill, too, had caught fire, and an ominous ruddy glare behind Warren's windows brightened and brightened.

Behind me, and on either side of me, the frenzied farmers were firing, maddened by the sight of the destruction, until I was obliged to run among the men and shake them, warning them to spare their powder until there was something besides the forest to shoot at. The interior of the tavern was thick with powder-smoke. I heard people coughing all around me.

And now, out of rifle-range, I caught my first good view of the marauders passing along the red stubble-fields north of Warren's barn—some hundred Indians and Tories, marching in columns of fours, rifles atrail, south by east. To my astonishment, instead of facing, they swung around us on a dog-trot, still out of range, pressing steadily forward across the rising ground. Then suddenly I comprehended. They cared nothing

for Oswaya when there was prime killing and plunder a-plenty to be had in the Valley. They were headed for Johnstown, where the vultures were already gathering.

Old Wemple had run down-stairs and flung open the door to watch them. I followed, rifle in hand, and we sped hotfoot across the stump-lot and out upon the hill. Surely enough, there they were in the distance, hastening away to the southward at a long, swinging lope, like a pack of timber-wolves jogging to a kill.

"Hold the tavern to-night and then strike out for Saratoga with all your people," I said hurriedly. "They're gone, and I mean to follow them."

"Be ye goin', sir?" quavered the old man. He turned to gaze at the blazing settlement below, tears running down his cheeks.

"Oh, Lord! Thy will be done—I guess," he said.

Farris, Warren, and Klock came up on the run. I pointed at the distant forest, into which the column was disappearing.

"Keep the tavern to-night," I said hoarsely; "there may be a skulking scalp-hunter or two prowling about until morning, but they'll be gone by sunrise. Good-by, lads!"

One by one they extended their powder-blackened, labor-torn hands, then turned away in silence toward the conflagration below, to face winter in the wilderness without a roof.

Rifle at trail, teeth set, I descended the hill, dodging among the blackened stumps, and entered the woods on a steady run. I had no need of a path save for comfort in the going, for this region was perfectly

familiar to me from the Sacandaga to the Kennyetto, and from Mayfield Creek to the Cayadutta—familiar as Broadway, from the Battery to Vauxhall. No Indian knew it better, nor could journey by short cuts faster than could I. For this was my own country, and I trusted it. The distance was five good miles to the now-abandoned settlement of Broadalbin, or Fonda's Bush, which some still call it, and my road lay south, straight as the bee flies, after I had once crossed the trail of the Oswaya raiders.

I crossed it where I expected to, in a soft and marshy glade, unblackened by the frost, where blue flowers tufted the swale, and a clear spring soaked the moss and trickled into a little stream which, I remembered, was ever swarming with tiny troutlings. Here I found the print of Cayuga and Mohawk moccasins and white man's boots a-plenty; and, for one fierce instant, burned to pick up the raw trail, hanging on their rear to drive one righteous bullet into them when chance gave me an opportunity. But the impulse fled as it came. Sick at heart I pressed forward once more, going at a steady wolf-trot; and so silently, so noiselessly, that twice I routed deer from their hemlock beds, and once came plump on a tree-cat that puffed up into fury and backed off spitting and growling, eyes like green flames, and every hair on end.

Tree after tree I passed, familiar to me in happier years—here an oak from which, a hundred yards due west, one might find sulphur water—there a pine, marking a clean mile from the Kennyetto at its nearest curve, yonder a birch-bordered gulley, haunted of partridge

and woodcock—all these I noted, scarcely seeing them at all, and plodded on and on until, far away through the trees, I heard the Kennyetto roaring in its gorge, like the wind at Adriutha.

A stump-field, sadly overgrown with choke-cherry, sumach, and rabbit-brier, warned me that I was within rifle-hail of the Rangers' post at Broadalbin. I swung to the west, then south, then west again, passing the ruins of the little settlement—a charred beam here, an empty cellar there, yonder a broken well-sweep, until I came to the ridge above the swamp, where I must turn east and ford the stream, under the rifles of the post.

There stood the chimney of what had once been my father's house—the new one, "burned by mistake," ere it had been completed.

I gave it one sullen glance; looked around me, saw but heaps of brick, mortar, and ashes, where barns, smoke-houses, granaries, and stables had stood. The cellar of my old home was almost choked with weeds; slender young saplings had already sprouted among the foundation-stones.

Passing the orchard, I saw the trees under which I had played as a child, now all shaggy and unpruned, tufted thick with suckers, and ringed with heaps of small rotting apples, lying in the grass as they had fallen. With a whirring, thunderous roar, a brood of crested grouse rose from the orchard as I ran on, startling me, almost unnerving me. The next moment I was at the shallow water's edge, shouting across at a blockhouse of logs; and a Ranger rose up and waved his furry cap at me, beckoning me to cross, and calling to me by name.

"Is that you, Dave Elerson?" I shouted.

"Yes, sir. Is there bad news?"

"Butler is in the Valley!" I answered, and waded into the cold, brown current, ankle-deep in golden bottom-sands. Breathless, dripping thrums trailing streams of water after me, I toiled up the bank and stood panting, leaning against the log hut.

"Where is the post?" I breathed.

"Out, sir, since last night."

"Which way?" I groaned.

"Johnstown way, Mr. Renault. The Weasel, Tim Murphy, and Nick Stoner was a-smellin' after moccasin-prints on the Mayfield trail. About sunup they made smoke-signals at me that they was movin' Kingsboro way on a raw trail."

He brought me his tin cup full of rum and water. I drank a small portion of it, then rinsed throat and mouth, still standing.

"Butler and Ross, with a thousand rifles and baggage-wagons, are making for the Tribes Hill ford," I said. "A hundred Cayugas, Mohawks, and Tories burned Oswaya just after sunrise, and are this moment pushing on to Johnstown. We've got to get there before them, Elerson."

"Yes, sir," he said simply, glancing at the flint in his rifle.

"Is there any chance of our picking up the scout?"

"If we don't, it's a dead scout for sure," he returned gravely. "Tim Murphy wasn't lookin' for scalpin' parties from the north."

I handed him his cup, tightened belt and breast-straps, trailed rifle, and struck the trail at a jog; and behind me trotted David Elerson, famed in ballad and story, which he could not read—nor could Tim Murphy, either, for that matter, whose learning lay in things unwritten, and whose eloquence flashed from the steel lips of a rifle that never spoke in vain.

Like ice-chilled wine the sweet, keen mountain air blew in our faces, filtering throat and nostrils as we moved; the rain that the frost had promised was still far away—perhaps not rain at all, but snow.

On we pressed, first breath gone, second breath steady; and only for the sickening foreboding that almost unnerved me when I thought of Elsin, I should not have suffered from the strain.

Somewhere to the west, hastening on parallel to our path, was strung out that pack of raiding bloodhounds; farther south, perhaps at this very instant entering Johnstown, moved the marauders from the north. A groan burst from my dry lips.

Slowing to a walk we began to climb, shoulder to shoulder, ascending the dry bed of a torrent fairly alive with partridges.

"Winter's comin' almighty fast; them birds is a-packin' and a-buddin' already. Down to the Bush I see them peckin' the windfall apples in your old orchard."

I scarcely heard him, but, as he calmly gossiped on, hour after hour, a feeling of dull surprise grew in me that at such a time a man could note and discuss such trifles. Ah, but he had no sweetheart there in the

threatened town, menaced by death in its most dreadful shape.

"Are the women in the jail?" I asked, my voice broken by spasmodic breathing as we toiled onward.

"I guess they are, sir—leastways Jack Mount was detailed there to handle the milishy." And, after a pause, gravely and gently: "Is your lady there, sir?"

"Yes—God help her!"

He said nothing; there was nothing of comfort for any man to say. I looked up at the sun.

"It's close to noontide, sir," said Elerson. "We'll make Johnstown within the half-hour. Shall we swing round by the Hall and keep cover, or chance it by the road to Jimmy Burke's?"

"What about the scout?" I asked miserably.

He shook his head, and over his solemn eyes a shadow passed.

"Mayhap," he muttered, "Tim Murphy's luck will hold, sir. He's been fired at by a hundred of their best marksmen; he's been in every bloody scrape, assault, ambush, retreat, 'twixt Edward and Cherry Valley, and never a single bullet-scratch. We may find him in Johnstown yet."

He swerved to the right: "With your leave, Captain Renault, we'll fringe the timber here. Look, sir! Yonder stands the Hall against the sky!"

We were in Johnstown. There, across Sir William's tree-bordered pastures and rolling stubble-fields, stood the baronial hall. Sunlight sparkled on the windows. I saw the lilacs, the bare-limbed locusts, the orchards, still

brilliant with scarlet and yellow fruit, the long stone wall and hedge fence, the lawns intensely green.

"It is deserted," I said in a low voice.

"Hark!" breathed Elerson, ear to the wind. After a moment I heard a deadened report from the direction of the village, then another and another; and, spite of the adverse breeze, a quavering, gentle, sustained sound, scarce more than a vibration, that hung persistently in the air.

"By God!" gasped Elerson, "it's the bell at the jail! The enemy are here! Pull foot, sir! Our time has come!"

Down the slope we ran, headed straight for the village. Gunshots now sounded distinctly from the direction of the Court-House; and around us, throughout the whole country, guns popped at intervals, sometimes a single distant report, then a quick succession of shots, like hunters shooting partridges; but we heard as yet no volley-firing.

"Tories and scalpers harrying the outlying farms," breathed Elerson. "Look sharp, sir! We're close to the village, and it's full o' Tories."

Right ahead of us stood a white house; and, as we crossed the hay-field behind it, a man came to the back door, leveled a musket, and deliberately shot at us. Instantly, and before he could spring back, Elerson threw up his rifle and fired, knocking the man headlong through the doorway.

"The impudent son of a slut!" he muttered to himself, coolly reloading. "Count one more Tory in hell, Davy, lad!"

Priming, his restless eyes searched the road-hedge ahead, then, ready once more, we broke into a trot, scrambled through the fence, and started down the road, which had already become a village street. It was fairly swarming with men running and dodging about.

The first thing I saw clearly was a dead woman lying across a horse-block. Then I saw a constable named Hugh McMonts running down the street, chased closely by two Indians and a soldier wearing a green uniform. They caught him as we fired, and murdered him in a doorway with hatchet and gun-stock, spattering everything with the poor wretch's brains.

Our impulsive and useless shots had instantly drawn the fire of three red-coated soldiers; and, as the big bullets whistled around us, Elerson grasped my arm, pulled me back, and darted behind a barn. Through a garden we ran, not stopping to load, through another barnyard, scattering the chickens into frantic flight, then out along a stony way, our ears ringing with the harsh din of the jail bell.

"There's the jail; run for it!" panted Elerson, as we came in sight of the solid stone structure, rising behind its palisades on the high ground.

I sprang across the road and up the slope, battering at the barricaded palings with my rifle-stock, while Elerson ran around the defenses bawling for admittance.

"Hurry, Elerson!" I cried, hammering madly for entrance; "here come the enemy's baggage-wagons up the street!"

"Jack Mount! Jack Mount! Let us in, ye crazy loon!" shouted Elerson.

Somebody began to unbolt the heavy slab gate; it creaked and swung just wide enough for a man to squeeze through. I shoved Elerson inside and followed, pushing into a mob of scared militia and panic-stricken citizens toward a huge buckskinned figure at a stockade loophole on the left.

"Jack Mount!" I called, "where are the women? Are they safe?"

He looked around at me, nodded in a dazed and hesitating manner, then wheeled quick as a flash, and fired through the slit in the logs.

I crawled up to the epaulment and peered down into the dusty street. It was choked with the enemy's baggage-wagons, now thrown into terrible confusion by the shot from Mount's rifle. Horses reared, backed, swerved, swung around, and broke into a terrified gallop; teamsters swore and lashed at their maddened animals, and some batmen, carrying a dead or wounded teamster, flung their limp burden into a wagon, and, seizing the horses' bits, urged them up the hill in a torrent of dust.

I fumbled for my ranger's whistle, set it to my lips, and blew the "Cease firing!"

"Let them alone!" I shouted angrily at Mount. "Have you no better work than to waste powder on a parcel of frightened clodhoppers? Send those militiamen to their posts. Two to a loop, yonder! Lively, lads; and see that you fire at nothing except Indians and soldiers. Jack, come up here!"

The big rifleman mounted the ladder and leaped to the rifle-platform, which quivered beneath his weight.

"I thought I'd best sting them once," he muttered.

"Their main force has circled the town westward toward the Hall. Lord, sir, it was a bad surprise they gave us, for we understood that Willett held them at Tribes Hill!"

I caught his arm in a grip of iron, striving to speak, shaking him to silence.

"Where—where is Miss Grey?" I said hoarsely. "You say the women are safe, do you not?"

"Mr. Renault—sir—" he stammered, "I have just arrived at the jail—I have not seen your wife."

My hand fell from his arm; his appalled face whitened.

"Last night, sir," he muttered, "she was at the Hall, watching the flames in the sky where Butler was burning the Valley. I saw her there in a crowd of townsfolk, women, children—the whole town was on the lawn there——"

He wiped his clammy face and moistened his lips; above us, in the wooden tower, the clamor of the bell never ceased.

"She spoke to me, asking for news of you. I—I had no news of you to tell her. Then an officer—Captain Little—fell a-bawling for the Rangers to fall in, and Billy Laird, Jack Shew, Sammons, and me—we had to go. So I fell in, sir; and the last I saw she was standing there and looking at the reddening sky——"

Blindly, almost staggering, I pushed past him, stumbling down the ladder, across the yard, and into the lower corridor of the jail. There were women a-plenty there; some clung to my arm, imploring news; some called out to me, asking for husband or son. I

looked blankly into face after face, all strangers; I mounted the stairs, pressing through the trembling throng, searching every whitewashed corridor, every room; then to the cellar, where the frightened children huddled, then out again, breaking into a run, hastening from blockhouse to blockhouse, the iron voice of the bell maddening me!

"Captain Renault! Captain Renault!" called out a militiaman, as I turned from the log rampart.

The man came hastening toward me, firelock trailing, pack and sack bouncing and flopping.

"My wife has news of your lady," he said, pointing to a slim, pale young woman who stood in the doorway, a shawl over her wind-blown hair.

I turned as she advanced, looking me earnestly in the face.

"Your lady was in the fort late last night, sir," she began. A fit of coughing choked her; overhead the dreadful clangor of the bell dinned and dinned.

Dumb, stunned, I waited while she fumbled in her soiled apron, and at last drew out a crumpled letter.

"I'll tell you what I know," she said weakly. "We had been to the Hall; the sky was all afire. My little boy grew frightened, and she—your sweet lady—she lifted him and carried him for me—I was that sick and weak from fright, sir——"

A fit of coughing shook her. She handed me the letter, unable to continue.

And there, brain reeling, ears stunned by the iron din of the bell which had never ceased, I read her last words to me:

"Carus, my darling, I don't know where you are. Please God, you are not at Oswaya, where they tell me the Indians have appeared above Varicks. Dearest lad, your Oneida came with your letter. I could not reply, for there were no expresses to go to you. Colonel Willett had news of the enemy toward Fort Hunter, and marched the next day. We hoped he might head them, but last night there was an alarm, and we all went out into the street. People were hastening to the Hall, and I went, too, being anxious, now that you are out there alone somewhere in the darkness.

"Oh, Carus, the sky was all red and fiery behind Tribes Hill; and women were crying and children sobbing all around me. I asked the Ranger, Mount, if he had news of you, and he was gentle and kind, and strove to comfort me, but he went away with his company on a run, and I saw the militia assembling where the drummers stood beating their drums in the torchlight.

"Somebody—a woman—said: 'It's hatchet and scalping again, and we women will catch it now.'

"And then a child screamed, and its mother was too weak to carry it, so I took it back for her to the jail.

"I sat in the jailer's room, thinking and thinking. Outside the barred window I heard a woman telling how Butler's men had already slain a whole family at Caughnawaga—an express having arrived with news of horrors unspeakable.

"Dearest, it came to me like a flash of light what I must do—what God meant me to do. Can you not understand, my darling? We are utterly helpless here. I must go back to this man—to this man who is riding hither with death on his right hand, and on his left hand, death!

"Oh, Carus! Carus! my sin has found me out! It is written that man should not put asunder those joined

together. I have defied Him! Yet He repays, mercifully, offering me my last chance.

"Sweetheart, I must take it. Can you not understand? This man is my lawful husband; and as his wife, I dare resist him; I have the right to demand that his Indians and soldiers spare the aged and helpless. I must go to him, meet him, and confront him, and insist that mercy be shown to these poor, terrified people. *And I must pay the price!*

"Oh, Carus! Carus! I love you so! Pray for me. God keep you! I must go ere it is too late. My horse is at Burke's. I leave this for you. Dear, I am striving to mend a shattered life with sacrifice of self—the sacrifice you taught me. I can not help loving you as I do; but I can strive to be worthy of the man I love. This is the only way! ELSIN GREY."

The woman had begun to speak again. I raised my eyes.

"Your sweet lady gave me the letter—I waited while she wrote it in the warden's room—and she was crying, sir. God knows what she has written you!—but she kissed me and my little one, and went out into the yard. I have not seen her since, Mr. Renault."

Would the din of that hellish bell never cease its torture? Would sound never again give my aching brain a moment's respite? The tumult, men's sharp voices, the coughing of the sick woman, the dull, stupid blows of sound were driving me mad! And now more noises broke out—the measured crash of volleys; cheers from the militia on the parapet; an uproar swelling all around me. I heard some one shout, "Willett has entered the town!" and the next instant the smashing

roll of drums broke out in the street, echoing back from façade and palisade, and I heard the fifes and hunting-horns playing "Soldiers' Joy!" and the long double-shuffling of infantry on the run.

The icy current of desperation flowed back into every vein. My mind cleared; I passed a steady hand over my eyes, looked around me, and, drawing the ranger's whistle from my belt, set it to my lips.

The clear, mellow call dominated the tumult. A man in deerskin dropped from the rifle-platform, another descended the ladder, others came running from the log bastions, all flocking around me like brown deer herding to the leader's call.

"Fall in!" I scarce knew my own voice.

The eager throng of riflemen fell away into a long rank, stringing out across the jail yard.

"Shoulder arms! Right dress! Right face! Call off!"

The quick responses ran along the ranks: "Right! left! right! left!——"

"Right double!" I called. Then, as order followed order, the left platoon stepped forward, halted, and dressed.

"Take care to form column by platoons right, right front. To the right—face! March!"

The gates were flung wide as we passed through, and, wheeling, swung straight into the streets of Johnstown with a solid hurrah!

A battalion of Massachusetts infantry was passing St. John's Church, filling William Street with the racket of their drums. White cross-belts and rifles shining,

the black-gaitered column plodded past, mounted officers leading. Then a field-piece, harness and chains clanking, came by, breasting the hill at a gallop, amid a tempest of cheers from my riflemen. And now the Tryon County men were passing in dusty ranks, and more riflemen came running up, falling in behind my company.

"There's Tim Murphy!" cried Elerson joyously. "He has your horse, Captain!"

Down the hill from Burke's Inn came Murphy on a run, leading my horse; behind him sped the Weasel and a rifleman named Sammons, and Burke himself, flourishing a rifle, all greeted lustily by the brown ranks behind me, amid shouts of laughter as Jimmy Burke, in cap and fluttering forest-dress, fell in with the others.

"Captain Renault, sorr—" I turned. Murphy touched his raccoon cap.

"Sorr, I hov f'r to repoort thot ye're sweet lady, sorr, is wid Butler at Johnson Hall."

"Safe?" My lips scarcely moved.

"Safe so far, sorr. She rides wid their Major, Ross, an' the shtaff-officers in gold an' green."

I sprang to the saddle, raised my rifle and shook it. A shrill, wolfish yelling burst from the Rangers.

"Forward!" And "Forward! forward!" echoed the sergeants, as we swung into a quick step.

The rifles on the hill by the Hall were speaking faster and faster now. A white cloud hid the Hall and the trees, thickening and spreading as a volley of musketry sent its smoke gushing into the bushes. Then, in the dun-colored fog, a red flame darted out, splitting

the air with a deafening crash, and the thunder-clap of the cannon-shot shook the earth under our hurrying feet.

We were close to the Hall now. Behind a hedge fence running east our militia lay, firing very coolly into the wavering mists, through which twinkled the ruddy rifle-flames of the enemy. The roar of the firing was swelling, dominated by the tremendous concussions of the field-piece. I saw officers riding like mounted phantoms through the smoke; dead men in green, dead men in scarlet, and here and there a dead Mohawk lay in the hedge. A wounded officer of Massachusetts infantry passed us, borne away to the village by Schoharie militia.

As we started for the hedge on a double, suddenly, through the smoke, the other side of the hedge swarmed with men. They were everywhere, crashing through the thicket, climbing the fence, pouring forward with shouts and hurrahs. Then the naked form of an Indian appeared; another, another; the militia, disconcerted and surprised, struck at them with their gunstocks, wavered, turned, and ran toward us.

I had already deployed my right into line; the panic-stricken militia came heading on as we opened to let them through; then we closed up; a sheet of flame poured out into the very faces of Butler's Rangers; another, another!

Bolt upright in the stirrups, I lifted my smoking rifle: "Rangers! Charge!"

Beneath my plunging horse a soldier in green went down screaming; an Indian darted past, falling to death

under a dozen clubbed rifles; then a yelling mass of green-coated soldiers, forced and crushed back into the hedge, turned at bay; and into this writhing throng leaped my riflemen, hatchets flashing.

"Hold that hedge, Captain Renault!" came a calm voice near me, and I saw Colonel Willett at my elbow, struggling with his frantic horse.

A mounted officer near him cried: "The rest of the militia on the right are wavering, Colonel!"

"Then stop them, Captain Zielie!" said Willett, dragging his horse to a stand. His voice was lost in the swelling roar of the fusillade where my Rangers were holding the hedge. On the extreme right, through an open field, I saw the militia scattering, darting about wildly. There came a flash, a roar, and the scene was blotted out in a huge fountain of flame and smoke.

"They've blown up the ammunition-wagon! Butler's men have taken our cannon!" yelled a soldier, swinging his arms frantically. "Oh, my God! the militia are running from the field!"

It was true. One of those dreadful and unaccountable panics had seized the militia. Nothing could stop them. I saw Colonel Willett spur forward, sword flashing; officers rode into the retreating lines, begging and imploring them to stand. The pressure on my riflemen was enormous, and I ordered them to fall back by squads in circles to the fringe of woods. They obeyed very coolly and in perfect order, retiring step by step, shot by shot.

Massachusetts infantry were holding the same woods; a few Tryon militia rallied to us, and Colonel

Gray took command. "For God's sake, Renault, go and help Willett stop the militia!" he begged. "I'll hold this corner till you can bring us aid!"

I peered about me through the smoke, gathered bridle, wheeled through the bushes into the open field, and hurled my horse forward along the line of retreat.

Never had I believed brave men could show such terror. Nobody heeded me, nobody listened. At my voice they only ran the faster, I galloping alongside, beseeching them, and looking for Willett.

Straight into the streets of Johnstown fled the militia, crowding the town in mad and shameless panic, carrying with them their mounted officers, as a torrent hurls chips into a whirlpool.

"Halt! In Heaven's name, what is the matter? Why, you had them on the run, you men of Tryon, you Ulster men!" cried Colonel Willett.

A seething mass of fugitives was blocked at the old stone church. Into them plunged the officers, cursing, threatening, imploring, I among them, my horse almost swept from his legs in the rushing panic.

"Don't run, lads," I said; "don't put us all to this shame! Why, what are you afraid of? I saw nothing to scare a child on the hill. And this is my first battle. I thought war was something to scare a man. But this is nothing. You wouldn't leave the Rangers there all alone, would you? They're up there drilling holes in the Indians who came to murder your wives and children. Come on, boys! You didn't mean it. We can't let those yagers and Greens take a cannon as easily as that!"

They were listening to Willett, too; here and there

a sergeant took up the pleading. I found an exhausted drummer-boy sitting on the steps of the church, and induced him to stand up and beat the assembly. Officer after officer struggled through the mob, leading out handfuls of men; lines formed; I snatched a flag from an ensign and displayed it; a company, at shoulder arms, headed by a drummer, emerged from the chaos, marching in fair alignment; another followed more steadily; line after line fell in and paraded; the fifes began to squeal, and the shrill quickstep set company after company in motion.

"It's all right, lads!" cried Willett cheerily, as he galloped forward. "We are going back for that cannon we lost by mistake. Come on, you Tryon County men! Don't let the Rangers laugh at you!"

Then the first cheer broke out; mounted officers rode up, baring their swords, surrounding the Colonel. He gave me a calm and whimsical look, almost a smile:

"Scared, Carus?"

"No, sir."

"D'ye hear that firing to the left? Well, that's Rowley's flanking column of levies and the Massachusetts men. Hark! Listen to that rifle music! Now we'll drive them! Now we've got them at last!"

I caught him by the sleeve, and bent forward from my saddle:

"Do you know that the woman I am to marry is with the enemy?" I demanded hoarsely.

"No. Good God, Carus! Have they got her?"

His shocked face paled; he laid his hand on my shoulder, riding in silence as I told him what I knew.

"By Heaven!" he said, striking his gloved hands together, "we'll get her yet, Carus; I tell you, we'll get her safe and sound. Do you think I mean to let these mad wolves slink off this time and skulk away unpunished? Do you suppose I don't know that the time has come to purge this frontier for good and all of Walter Butler? You need not worry, Carus. It is true that God alone could have foreseen the strange panic that started these militiamen on a run, as though they had never smelled powder—as though they had not answered a hundred alarms from Oriskany to Currietown. I could not foresee that, but, by God, we've stopped it! And now I tell you we are going to deal Walter Butler a blow that will end his murdering career forever! Look sharp!"

A racket of rifle-fire broke out ahead; two men dropped.

We were in the smoke now. Indians rose from every thicket and leaped away in retreat; the column broke into a run, mounted officers trotting forward, pistol and sword in hand.

"Why, there's our cannon, boys!" cried Colonel Lewis excitedly.

A roar greeted the black Colonel's words; the entire line sprang forward; a file of Oneidas sped along our flanks, rifles a-trail.

Through the smoke I saw the Hall now, and in a field to the east of it a cannon which some Highlanders and soldiers in green uniforms were attempting to drag off.

At the view the yelling onset was loosed; the kilted

troops and the green-coated soldiers took to their legs, and I saw our militia swarming around the field-piece, hugging it, patting it, embracing it, while from the woods beyond my Rangers cheered and cheered. Ah! now the militia were in it again; the hedge fence was carried with a rush, and all around us in the red sunset light shouting militia, Royal Greens, and naked, yelling Indians were locked in a death struggle, hatchet, knife, and rifle-butt playing their silent and awful part.

An officer in a scarlet coat galloped at me full tilt, snapped his pistol as he passed, wheeled, and attempted to ride me down at his sword's point, but Colonel Willett pistoled him as I parried his thrust with my rifle-barrel; and I saw his maddened horse bearing him away, he swaying horridly in his saddle, falling sidewise, and striking the ground, one spurred heel entangled in his stirrup.

Sickened, I turned away, and presently sounded the rally for my Rangers. For full twenty minutes militia and riflemen poured sheets of bullets into the Royal Greens from the hedge fence; their flank doubled, wavered, and broke as the roaring fire of Rowley's men drew nearer. Twilight fell; redder and redder leaped the rifle-flames through the smoky dusk. Suddenly their whole line gave way, and we broke through—riflemen, militia, Massachusetts men—broke through with a terrific yell. And before us fled Indian and Tory, yager and renegade, Greens, Rangers, Highlanders, officers galloping madly, baggage-wagons smashed, horses down, camp trampled to tatters and splinters as the vengeance of Tryon County passed in a tornado of fury

that cleansed the land forever of Walter Butler and his demons of the North!

In that furious onslaught through the darkness and smoke, where prisoners were being taken, Indians and Greens chased and shot down, a steady flicker of rifle-fire marked the course of the disastrous rout, and the frenzied vengeance following—an awful vengeance now, for, in the blackness, a new and dreadful sound broke—the fiercely melancholy scalp-yell of my Oneidas!

Galloping across a swampy field, where the dead and scalped lay in the ooze, I shouted the Wolf Clan challenge; and a lone cry answered me, coming nearer, nearer, until in the smoke-shot darkness I saw the terrific painted shape of an Indian looming, saluting me with uplifted and reeking hatchet.

"Brother! brother!" I groaned, "by the Wolf whose sign we wear, and by the sign of Tharon, follow her who is to be my wife—follow by night, by day, through the haunts of men, through the still places! Go swiftly, O my brother the Otter—swiftly as hound on trail! I charge you by that life you owe, by that clan tie which breaks not when nations break, by the sign of Tharon, that floats among the stars forever, find me this woman whom I am to wed! Your life for hers, O brother! Go!"

CHAPTER XV

BUTLER'S FORD

For four breathless days the broad, raw trail of a thousand men in headlong flight was the trampled path we traveled. Smashing straight through the northern wilderness, our enemy with horses, wagons, batmen, soldiers, Indians burst into the forest, tearing saplings, thickets, underbrush aside in their mad northward rush for the safety of the Canadas and the shelter denied them here. Threescore Oneida hatchets glittered in their rear; four hundred rifles followed; for the Red Beast was in flight at last, stricken, turning now and again to snarl when the tireless, stern-faced trackers drew too near, then running on again, growling, impotent. And the Red Beast must be done to death.

What fitter place to end him than here in the wild twilight of shaggy depths, unlighted by the sun or moon?—here where the cold, brawling streams smoked in the rank air; where black crags crouched, watching the hunting—here in these awful deeps, shunned by the deer, unhaunted by wolf and panther—depths fit only for the monstrous terror that came out of them, and now, wounded, and cold heart pulsing terror, was scrambling back again into the dense and dreadful twilight of eternal shadow-land.

One by one their pack-laden horses fell out ex-

hausted; and we found them, heads hanging, quivering and panting beside the reeking trail; one by one their gaunt cattle, mired in bog and swamp, entangled in windfalls, greeted us, bellowing piteously as we passed. The forest itself fought for us, reaching out to jerk wheels from axle, bringing wagon and team down crashing. Their dead lay everywhere uncared for, even unscalped and unrobbed in the bruised and trampled path of flight; clothing, arms, provisions were scattered pell-mell on every side; and now at length, hour after hour, as we headed them back from trail and highway, and blocked them from their boats at Oneida Lake, driving, forcing, scourging them straight into the black jaws of a hungry wilderness, we began to pass their wounded—ghastly, bloody, ragged things, scarce animate, save for the dying brilliancy of their hollowed eyes.

On, on, hotfoot through the rain along the smoking trail; twilight by day, depthless darkness by night, where we lay panting in starless obscurity, listening to the giant winds of the wilderness—vast, resistless, illimitable winds flowing steadily through the unseen and naked crests of forests, colder and ever colder they blew, heralding the trampling blasts of winter, charging us from the north.

On the fifth day it began to snow at dawn. Little ragged flakes winnowed through the clusters of scarlet maple-leaves, sifted among the black pines, coming faster and thicker, driving in slanting, whirling flight across the trail. In an hour the moss was white; crimson sprays of moose-bush bent, weighted with snow and scarlet berries; the hurrying streams ran dark and

somber in their channels between dead-white banks; swamps turned blacker for the silvery setting; the flakes grew larger, pelting in steady, thickening torrents from the clouds as we came into a clearing called Jerseyfield, on the north side of Canada Creek; and here at last we were met by a crackling roar from a hundred rifles.

The Red Beast was at bay!

Up and down, through the dense snowy veil descending, the orange-tinted rifle-flames flashed and sparkled and flickered; all around us a shower of twigs and branches descended in a steady rain. Then our brown rifles blazed their deadly answer. Splash! spatter! splash! their dead dropped into the stream; and, following, dying and living took to the dark water, thrashing across through snowy obscurity. I heard their horses wallowing through the fords, iron hoofs frantically battering the rocky, shelving banks for foothold; I heard them shriek when the Oneida tigers leaped upon them; I heard their wounded battling and screaming as they drowned in the swollen waters!

We lay and fired at their phantom lines, now attempting to retreat at a dog-trot in single file; and as we knocked man after man from the plodding rank the others leaped over their writhing, fallen comrades, neither turning nor pausing in their dogged flight. The snow slackened, falling more thinly to the west; and, as the dazzling curtain grew transparent, a mass of men in green suddenly rose from the whitened hemlock-scrub and fired at our riflemen arriving in column.

Then ensued a scene nigh indescribable. With one yelling bound, Ranger and Oneida were on them, shoot-

ing, stabbing, dragging them down; and, as they broke cover, their mounted officers, dashing out of the thicket, wheeled northward into galloping flight; and among them at last I saw my enemy, and knew him.

A dozen Oneidas were after him. His horse, spurred to a gallop, crashed through the brush, and was in the water at a leap; and he turned in midstream and shook his pistol at them insultingly.

By Heaven, he rode superbly as the swollen waters of the ford boiled to his horse's straining shoulders, while the bullets clipped the gilded cocked-hat from his head and struck his raised pistol from his hand.

"Head him!" shouted Elerson; "don't let that man get clear!" Indians and Rangers raced madly along the bank of the creek, pacing the fugitive as he galloped.

"Take him alive!" I cried, as Butler swung his horse with a crash straight into the willow thickets on the north. We lost him to view as I spoke; and I sounded the rally-whistle, and ran up the bank of the creek, leading my horse at a trot behind me.

The snowfall had ceased; the sun glimmered, then blazed out in the clearing, flooding the whitened ground with a dazzling radiance. Running, stumbling, falling, struggling through brush and brake and brier-choked marsh, I saw ahead of me three Oneida Indians swiftly cross my path to the creek's edge and crouch, scanning the opposite shore. Almost immediately the Rangers Murphy, Renard, and Elerson emerged from the snowy bushes beside them; and at the same instant I saw Walter Butler ride up on the opposite side of the creek, glance backward, then calmly draw bridle in plain sight. He

was fey; I knew it. His doom was upon him. He flung himself from his horse close to the ford where, set in the rock, a living spring of water mirrored the sun; then he knelt down, drew his tin cup from his belt, bent over, and looked into the placid silver pool. What he saw reflected there Christ alone knows, for he sprang back, passed his hand across his eyes, and reached out his cup blindly, plunging it deep into the water.

Never, never shall I forget that instant picture as it broke upon my view; my deadly enemy kneeling by the spring, black hair disheveled, the sunshine striking his tin cup as he raised it to his lips; the three naked Oneidas, in their glistening scarlet paint, eagerly raising their rifles, while the merciless weapons of Murphy and Elerson slowly fell to the same level, focused on that kneeling figure across the dark waters of the stream.

A second only, then, God knows why, I could not endure to witness a justice so close allied with murder, and sprang forward, crying out: "Cease fire! Take him alive!" But, with the words half-sped, flame after flame parted from those leveled muzzles; and through the whirling smoke I saw Walter Butler fall, roll over and over, his body and limbs contracting with agony; then on all fours again, on his knees, only to sink back in a sitting posture, his head resting on his hand, blood pouring between his fingers.

Into the stream plunged an Oneida, rifle and knife aloft, glittering in the sun. The wounded man saw him coming, and watched him as he leaped up the bank; and while Walter Butler looked him full in the face the savage trembled, crouching, gathering for a leap.

"Stop that murder!" I shouted, plunging into the ford as Butler, aching head still lifted, turned a deathly face toward me. One eye had been shot out, but the creature was still alive, and knew me—knew me, heard me ask for the quarter he had not asked for; saw me coming to save him from his destiny, and smiled as the Oneida sprang on him with a yell and ripped the living scalp away before my sickened eyes.

"Finish him, in God's mercy!" bellowed the Ranger Sammons, running up. The Oneida's hatchet, swinging like lightning, flashed once; and the severed soul of Walter Butler was free of the battered, disfigured thing that lay oozing crimson in the trampled snow.

Dead! And I heard the awful scalp-yell swelling from the throats of those who had felt his heavy hand. Dead! And I heard cheers from those whose loved ones had gone down to death to satiate his fury. And now he, too, was on his way to face those pale accusers waiting there to watch him pass—specters of murdered men, phantoms of women, white shapes of little children—God! what a path to the tribunal behind whose thunderous gloom hell's own lightning flared!

As I gazed down at him the roar of the fusillade died away in my ears. I remembered him as I had seen him there at New York in our house, his slim fingers wandering over the strings of the guitar, his dark eyes drowned in melancholy. I remembered his voice, and the song he sang, haunting us all with its lingering sadness—the hopeless words, the sad air, redolent of dead flowers—doom, death, decay!

The thrashing and plunging of horses roused me.

I looked around to see Colonel Willett ride up, followed by two or three mounted officers in blue and buff, pulling in their plunging horses. He looked down at the dead, studying the crushed face, the uniform, the blood-drenched snow.

"Is that Butler?" he asked gravely.

"Yes," I said; and drew a corner of his cloak across the marred face.

Nobody uncovered, which was the most dreadful judgment those silent men could pass.

"Scalped?" motioned Colonel Lewis significantly.

"He belongs to your party," observed Willett quietly. Then, looking around as the rifle-fire to the left broke out again: "The pursuit has ended, gentlemen. What punishment more awful could we leave them to than these trackless solitudes? For I tell you that those few among them who shall attain the Canadas need fear no threat of hell in the life to come, for they shall have served their turn. Sound the recall!"

I laid my hand upon his saddle, looking up into his face:

"Pardon," I said, in a low voice; "*I* must go on!"

"Carus! Carus!" he said softly, "have they not told you?"

"Told me?" I stared. "What? What—in the name of God?"

"She was taken when we struck their rear-guard at one o'clock this afternoon! Was there no one to tell you, lad!"

"Unharmed?" I asked, steadying myself against his stirrup.

"Faint with fatigue, brier-torn, in rags—his vengeance, but—*nothing worse.* That quarter-breed Montour attended her, supported her, struggled on with her through all the horrors of this retreat. He had herded the Valley prisoners together, guarded by Cayugas. The executioner lies dead a mile below, his black face in the water. And here *he* lies!"

He swung his horse, head sternly averted. I flung myself into my saddle.

"This way, lad. She lies in a camp-wagon at headquarters, asleep, I think. Mount and your Oneida guard her. And the girl, Montour, lies stretched beside her, watching her as a dog watches a cradled child."

The hunting-horns of the light infantry were sounding the recall as we rode through the low brush of Jerseyfield, where the sunset sky was aflame, painting the tall pines, staining the melting snow to palest crimson.

From black, wet branches overhead the clotted flakes fell, showering us as we came to the hemlock shelter where the camp-wagon stood. A fire burned there; before it crowded a shadowy group of riflemen; and one among them moved forward to meet me, touching his fur cap and pointing.

As I reached the rough shelter of fringing evergreen Mount and Little Otter stepped out; and I saw the giant forest-runner wink the tears away as he laid his huge finger across his lips.

"She sleeps as sweetly as a child," he whispered. "I told her you were coming. Oh, sir, it will tear your heart out to see her small white feet so bruised, and the soft, baby hands of her raw at the wrists, where they

tied her at night. . . . *Is* he surely dead, sir, as they say?"

"I saw him die, thank God!"

"That is safer for him, I think," said Mount simply. "Will you come this way, sir? Otter, fetch a splinter o' fat pine for a light. Mind the wheel there, Mr. Renault—this way on tiptoe!"

He took the splinter-light from the Oneida, fixed it in a split stick, backed out, and turned away, followed by the Indian.

At first I could not see, and set the burning stick nearer. Then, as I bent over the rough wagon, I saw her lying there very white and still, her torn hands swathed with lint, her bandaged feet wrapped in furs. And beside her, stretched full length, lay Lyn Montour, awake, dark eyes fixed on mine.

She smiled as she caught my eye; then something in my face sobered her. "He is dead?" she motioned with her lips. And my lips moved assent.

Gravely, scarcely stirring, she reached up and unbound her hair, letting it down over her face. I understood, and, stepping to the fire, returned with a charred ember. She held out first one hand, then the other, and I marked the palms with the ashes, touched her forehead, her breast, her feet. Thus, in the solemn presence of death itself, she claimed at the tribunal of the Most High the justice denied on earth, signing herself a widow with the ashes none but a wedded wife may dare to wear.

Lower and lower burned the tiny torch, sank to a spark, and went out. The black curtains of obscurity

closed in; redder and redder spread the glare from the camp-fire; crackling and roaring, the flames rose, tufted with smoke, through which a million sparks whirled upward, showering the void above. Dark shapes moved in the glow with a sparkle of spur and sword as they turned; the infernal light fell on the naked bodies of Oneidas, sitting like demons, eyes blinking at the flames. And through the roar of the fire I heard their chanting undertone, monotonous, interminable, saluting their dead:

"*Cover the White Throat at Carenay,*
Lest evil fall at Danascara,
Lay the phantom away,
Men of Thendara,
Trails of Kayaderos
And Adriutha
Cover our loss!
Tree of Oswaya,
From Garoga
To Caroga
Cover the White Throat
For the sake of the Silver Boat afloat
In the Water of Light, O Tharon!
This for the pledge of Aroronon
Lest the Long House end
And the Tree bend
And our dead ascend in every trail
And the Great League fail.
Now by the brotherhood ye've sworn
Let the Oneida mourn."

And I heard from the forest the deadened blows of mattock and spade, and saw the glimmer of burial torches; and, through the steady chanting of the Oneida, the solemn voice of the chaplain in prayer for dead and living:

"Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us. And establish Thou the work of our hands upon us—yea, the work of our hands, establish Thou it!"

It lacked an hour to dawn when the harsh, stringy drums rolled from the forest and the smoky camp awoke; and I, keeping my vigil, there in the shadow where she lay, listening and bending above her, was aware of a bandaged hand touching me—a feverish arm about my neck, drawing my head lower, closer, till, in the darkness, my face lay on hers, and our tremulous lips united.

"Is all well, my beloved?"

"All is well."

"And we part no more?"

"No more."

Silence, then: "Why do they cheer so, Carus?"

"It is a lost soul they are speeding, child."

"His?"

"Yes."

She breathed feverishly, her little bandaged hands holding my face. "Lift me a little, Carus; I can not move my legs. Did you know he abandoned me to the Cayugas because I dared to ask his mercy for the innocent? I think his reason was unseated when I came upon him there at Johnson Hall—so much of blood and

death lay on his soul. His own men feared him; and, Carus, truly I do not think he knew me else he had never struck me in that burst of rage, so that even the Cayugas interposed—for his knife was in his hands." She sighed, nestling close to me in the rustling straw, and closed her eyes as the torches flared and the horses were backed along the pole.

In the ruddy light I saw Jack Mount approaching. He halted, touched his cap, and smiled; then his blue eyes wandered to the straw where Lyn Montour lay, sleeping the stunned sleep of exhaustion; and into his face a tenderness came, softening his bold mouth and reckless visage.

"The Weasel drives, sir. Tim and Dave and I, we jog along to ease the wheels—if it be your pleasure, sir. We go by the soft trail. A week should see you and yours in Albany. The Massachusetts surgeon is here to dress your sweet lady's hurts. Will you speak with him, Mr. Renault?"

I bent and kissed the bandaged hands, the hot forehead under the tangled hair, then whispering that all was well I went out into the gray dawn where the surgeon stood unrolling lint.

"Those devils tied their prisoners mercilessly at night," he said, "and the scars may show, Mr. Renault. But her flesh is wholesome, and the torn feet will heal—are healing now. Your lady will be lame."

"For life?"

"Oh—perhaps the slightest limp—scarce to be noticed. And then again, she is so sound, and her blood so pure—who knows? Even such tender little feet as

hers may bear her faultlessly once more. Patience, Mr. Renault."

He parted the hanging blankets and went in, emerging after a little while to beckon me.

"I have changed the dressing; the wounds are benign and healthy. She has some fever. The shock is what I fear. Go to her; you may do more than I could."

As the sun rose we started, the Weasel driving, I crouching at her side, her torn hands in mine; and beside us, Lyn Montour, watching Jack Mount as he strode along beside the wagon, a new angle to his cap, a new swagger in his step, and deep in his frank blue eyes a strange smile that touched the clean, curling corners of his lips.

"Look!" breathed Murphy, gliding along on the other side, "'tis the gay day f'r Jack Mount whin Lyn Montour's black eyes are on him—the backwoods dandy!"

I looked down at Elsin. The fever flushed her cheeks. Into her face there crept a beauty almost unearthly.

"My darling, my darling!" I whispered fearfully, leaning close to her. Her eyes met mine, smiling, but in their altered brilliancy I saw she no longer knew me.

"Walter," she said, laughing, "your melancholy suits me—yet love is another thing. Go ask of Carus what it is to love! He has my soul bound hand and foot and locked in the wall there, where he keeps the letters he writes. If they find those letters some man will hang. I think it will be you, Walter, or perhaps Sir Peter. I'm love-sick—sick o' love—for Carus mocks

me! Is it easy to die, Walter? Tell me, for you are dead. If only Carus loved me! He kissed me so easily that night—I tempting him. So now that I am damned —what matter how he uses me? Yet he never struck me, Walter, as you strike!"

Hour after hour, terrified, I listened to her babble, and that gay little laugh, so like her own, that broke out as her fever grew, waxing to its height.

It waned at midday, but by sundown she grew restless, and the surgeon, Weldon, riding forward from the rear, took my place beside her, and I mounted my horse which Elerson led, and rode ahead, a deadly fear in my heart, and Black Care astride the crupper, a grisly shadow in the wilderness, dogging me remorselessly under pallid stars.

And now hours, days, nights, sun, stars, moon, were all one to me—things that I heeded not; nor did I feel aught of heat or cold, sun or storm, nor know whether or not I slept or waked, so terrible grew the fear upon me. Men came and went. I heard some say she was dying, some that she would live if we could get her from the wilderness she raved about; for her cry was ever to be freed of the darkness and the silence, and that they were doing me to death in New York town, whither she must go, for she alone could save me.

Tears seemed ever in my eyes, and I saw nothing clearly, only the black and endless forests swimming in mists; the silent riflemen trudging on, the little withered driver, in his ring-furred cap and caped shirt, too big for him; the stolid horses plodding on and on. Medical officers came from Willett—Weldon and Jermyn—and

the surgeon's mate, McLane; and they talked among themselves, glancing at her curiously, so that I grew to hate them and their whispers. A fierce desire assailed me to put an end to all this torture—to seize her, cradle her to my breast, and gallop day and night to the open air—as though that, and the fierce strength of my passion must hold back death!

Then, one day—God knows when—the sky widened behind the trees, and I saw the blue flank of a hill unchoked by timber. Trees grew thinner as we rode. A brush-field girdled by a fence was passed, then a meadow, all golden in the sun. Right and left the forest sheered off and fell away; field on field, hill on hill, the blessed open stretched to a brimming river, silver and turquoise in the sunshine, and, beyond it, crowning three hills, the haven!—the old Dutch city, high-roofed, red-tiled, glimmering like a jewel in the November haze —Albany!

And now, as we breasted the ascent, far away we heard drums beating. A white cloud shot from the fort, another, another, and after a long while the dull booming of the guns came floating to us, mixed with the noise of bells.

Elsin heard and sat up. I bent from my saddle, passing my arm around her.

"Carus!" she cried, "where have you been through all this dreadful night?"

"Sweetheart, do you know me?"

"Yes. How soft the sunlight falls! There is a city yonder. I hear bells." She sank down, her eyes on mine.

"The bells of old Albany, dear. Elsin, Elsin, do you truly know me?"

She smiled, the ghost of the old gay smile, and her listless arms moved.

Weldon, riding on the other side, nodded to me in quiet content:

"Now all she lacked she may have, Renault," he said, smiling. "All will be well, thank God! Let her sleep!"

She heard him, watching me as I rode beside her.

"It was only you I lacked, Carus," she murmured dreamily; and, smiling, fell into a deep, sweet sleep.

Then, as we rode into the first outlying farms, men and women came to their gates, calling out to us in their Low Dutch jargon, and at first I scarce heeded them as I rode, so stunned with joy was I to see her sleeping there in the sunlight, and her white, cool skin and her mouth soft and moist.

Gun on gun shook the air with swift concussion. The pleasant Dutch bells swung aloft in mellow harmony. Suddenly, far behind where our infantry moved in column, I heard cheer on cheer burst forth, and the horns and fifes in joyous fanfare, echoed by the solid outbreak of the drums.

"What are they cheering for, mother?" I asked an old Dutch dame who waved her kerchief at us.

"For Willett and for George the Virginian, sir," she said, dimpling and dropping me a courtesy.

"George the Virginian?" I asked, wondering. "Do you mean his Excellency?"

And still she dimpled and nodded and bobbed her

white starched cap, and I made nothing of what she said until I heard men shouting, "Yorktown!" and "The war ends! Hurrah!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" shouted a mounted officer, spurring past us up the hill; "Butler's dead, and Cornwallis is taken!"

"Taken?" I repeated incredulously.

The booming guns were my answer. High against the blue a jeweled ensign fluttered, silver, azure and blood red, its staff and halyards wrapped in writhing jets of snow-white smoke flying upward from the guns.

I rode toward it, cap in hand, head raised, awed in the presence of God's own victory! The shouting streets echoed and reechoed as we passed between packed ranks of townspeople; cheers, the pealing music of the bells, the thunderous shock of the guns grew to a swimming, dreamy sound, through which the flag fluttered on high, crowned with the golden nimbus of the sun!

"Carus!"

"Ah, sweetheart, did they wake you? Sleep on; the war is over!" I whispered, bending low above her. "Now indeed is all well with the world, and fit once more for you to live in."

And, as we moved forward, I saw her blue eyes lifted dreamily, watching the flag which she had served so well.

CHAPTER XVI

THE END

That brief and lovely season which in our Northland for a score of days checks the white onset of the snow, and which we call the Indian summer, bloomed in November when the last red leaf had fluttered to the earth. A fairy summer, for the vast arches of the skies burned sapphire and amethyst, and hill and woodland, innocent of verdure, were clothed in tints of faintest rose and cloudy violet; and all the world put on a magic livery, nor was there leaf nor stem nor swale nor tuft of moss too poor to wear some royal hint of gold, deep-veined or crusted lavishly, where the crested oaks spread, burnished by the sun.

Snowbird and goldfinch were with us—the latter veiling his splendid tints in modest russet; and now, from the north, came to us silent flocks of birds, all gray and rose, outriders of winter's crystal cortège, still halting somewhere far in the silvery north, where the white owls sit in the firs, and the world lies robed in ermine.

All through that mellow Indian summer my betrothed grew strong, and her hurts had nearly healed. And I, writing my letters by the open window in the drawing-room, had been promised that she might make her first essay to leave her chamber that day—sit in the outer

sunshine perhaps, perhaps stand upright and take a step or two. And, at this first tryst in the sunshine, she was to set our wedding day.

From my open window I could see the city on its three hills against the azure magnificence of the sky, and the calm, wide river, still as a golden pond, and the white sails of sloops, becalmed on glassy surfaces reflecting the blue woods.

A little stream ran foaming down to the river, passing the house through a lawn all starred with late-grown dandelions; and even yet the trout were running up to the still sands of their breeding-nooks above—great brilliant fish, spotted with flecks that glowed like living sparks; and now I looked to see if I might spy them pass, shooting the falls, gay in their bridal-dress of iridescent gems, wishing them good speed to their shadowy woodland tryst.

Too deeply happy, too content to more than trifle with the letters I must pen, I idled there, head on hand, listening for her I loved, watching the fair world in the sunshine there. Sometimes, smiling, I unfolded for the hundredth time and read again the generous letter from Sir Peter and Lady Coleville—so kindly, so cordial, so honorable, all patched with shreds of gossip of friend and foe, and how New York lay stunned at the news of Yorktown. Never a word of the part that I had played so long beneath their roof—only one grave, unselfish line, saying that they had heard me praised for my bearing at Johnstown battle, and that they had always known that I could conduct in no wise unworthy of a soldier.

Too, they promised, if a flag was to be had, to come to Albany for our wedding, saying we were wild and wilful, and needed chiding, promising to read us lessons merited.

And there was a ponderous letter from Sir Frederick Haldimand in answer to one I wrote telling him all—a strange mélange of rage at Butler's perfidy and insolence, and utter disgust with me; though he said, frankly enough, that he would rather see his kinswoman wedded to twenty rebels than to one Butler. With which he slammed his pen to an ungracious finish, ending with a complaint to heaven that the world had used him so shabbily at such a time as this.

Which sobered Elsin when I read it, she being the tenderest of heart; but I made her laugh ere the quick tears dried in her eyes, and she had written him the loveliest of letters in reply, which was already on its journey northward.

Writing to my father and mother of the happy news, I had not as yet received their approbation, yet knew it would come, though Elsin was a little anxious when I spoke so confidently.

Yet one more happiness was in store for me ere the greatest happiness of all arrived; for that morning, from Virginia, a little packet came to Elsin; and opening it together, we found a miniature of his Excellency, set in a golden oval, on which we read, inscribed: "With great esteem," and signed, "Geo. Washington."

So, was it wonderful that I, sitting there, should listen, smiling, for some sound above to warn me of her coming?

Never had sunshine on the gilded meadows lain so softly, never so pure and soft the aromatic air. And far afield I saw two figures moving, close together, often pausing to look upon the beauty of the sky and hills, then straying on like those who have found what they had sought for long ago—Jack Mount and Lyn Montour.

And, as I leaned there in the casement, following them with smiling eyes, a faint sound behind me made me turn, start to my feet with a cry.

All alone she stood there, pale and lovely, blue eyes fixed on mine; and, at my cry, she took a little step, and then another, flushing with shy pride.

"Carus! Sweetheart! Do you see?"

And at first she protested prettily as I caught her in my arms, lifting her in fear lest her knees give way, then smiled assent.

"Bear me, if you will," she breathed, her white arms tightening about my neck; "carry me with all the burdens you have borne so long, my strong, tall lover!—lest I dash my foot against a stone, and fall at your feet to worship and adore! Here am I at last! Ah, what am I to say to you? The day? Truly, do you desire to wed me still? Then listen; bend your head, adored of men, and I will whisper to you what my heart and soul desire."

(6)

THE END

BETHA
DISCARD